



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

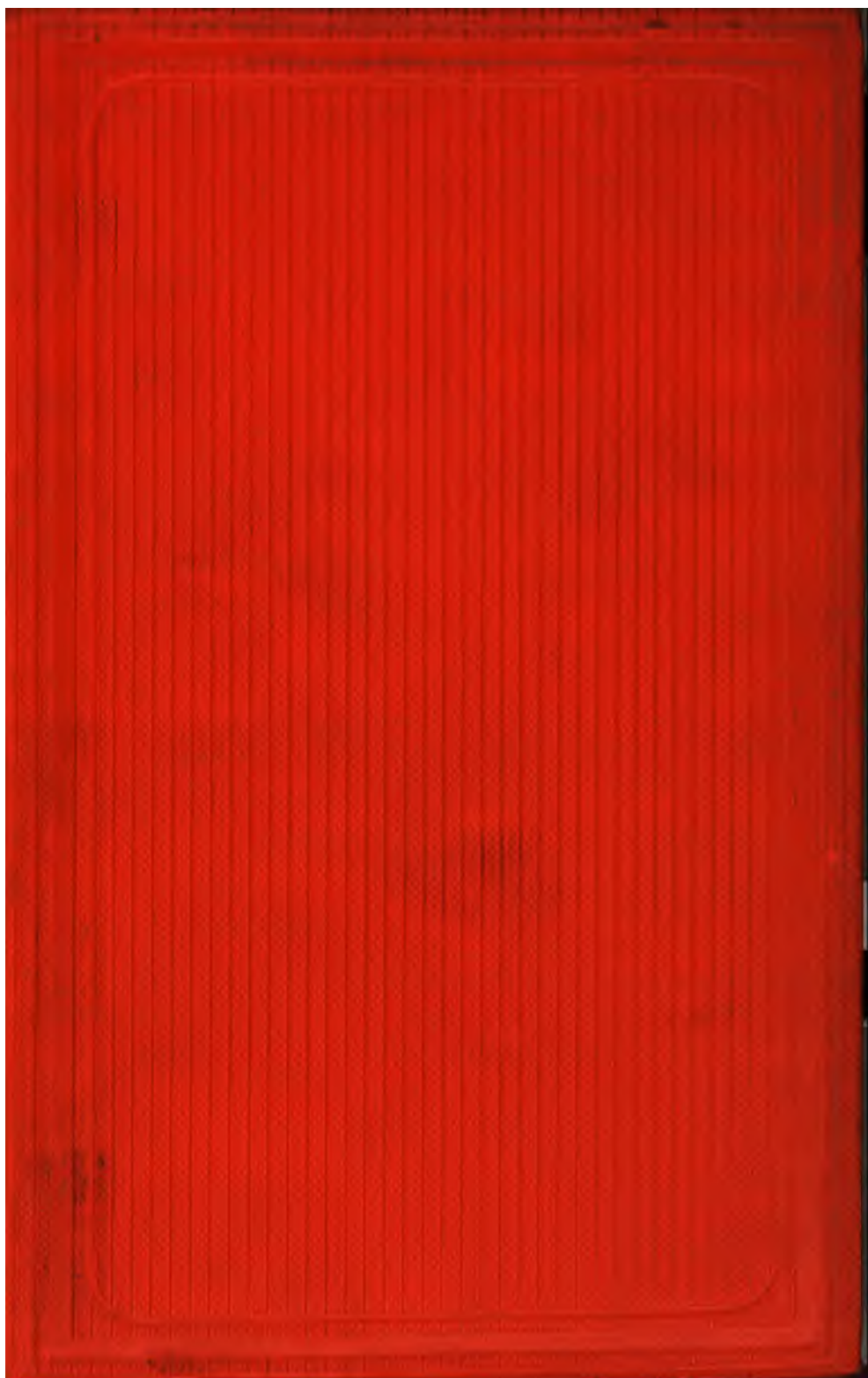
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

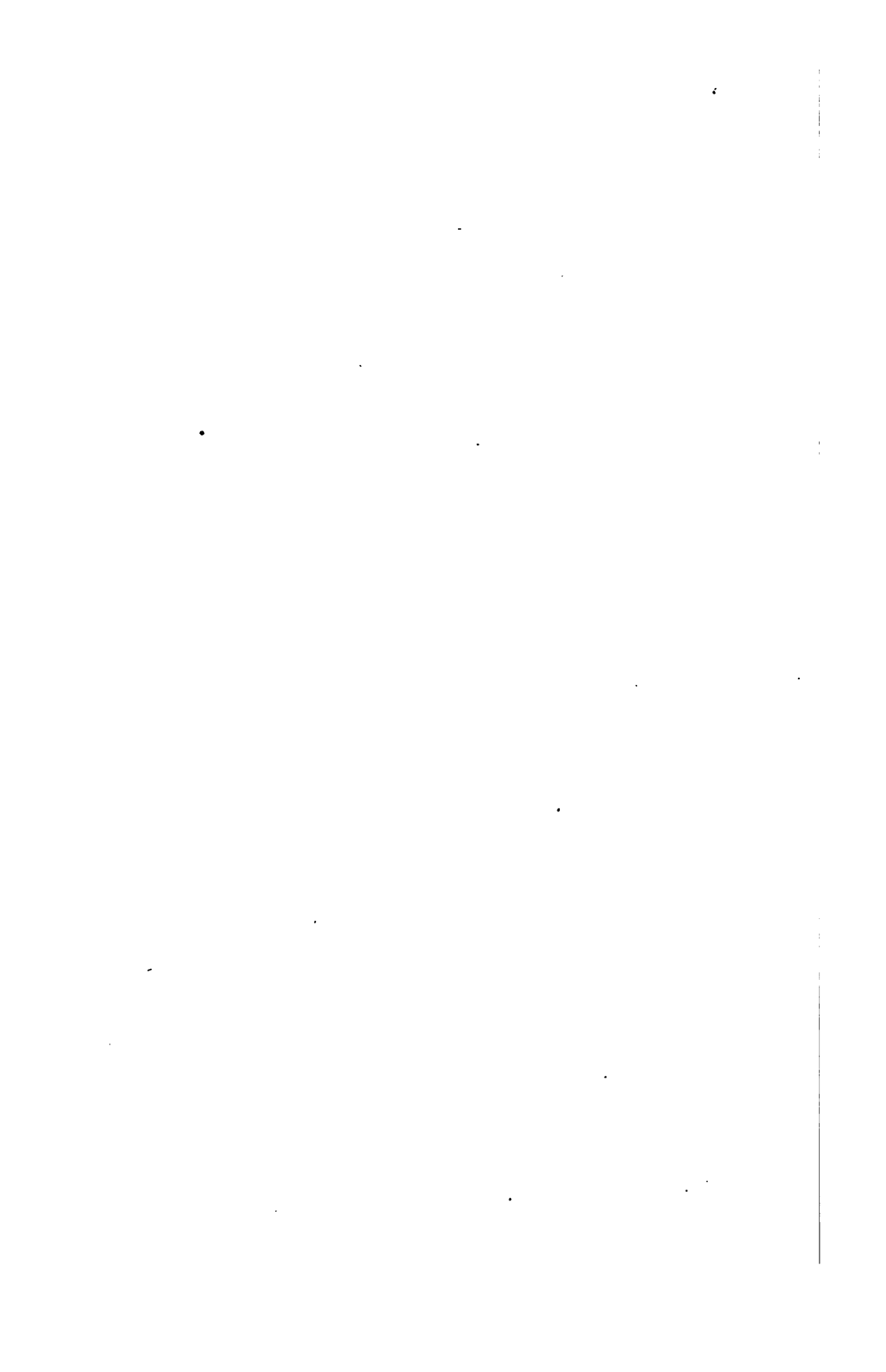




600064600M









# GUILTY; OR, NOT GUILTY.

A NOVEL.

BY

MRS. GORDON SMYTHIES,

AUTHOR OF

“COUSIN GEOFFREY,” “TRUE TO THE LAST,”

&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:  
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,  
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,  
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1864.

*The right of Translation is reserved.*

250. p. 190.



LONDON:  
PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL, BLENHEIM HOUSE,  
BLENHEIM STREET, OXFORD STREET.

# GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY.

---

## CHAPTER I.

“ The love of gaming is the worst of ills,  
With ceaseless fears the blackened soul it fills ;  
Kills health, pawns honour, plunges in disgrace,  
And turns an angel's to a demon's face.”

LYTTLETON.

ALL things considered, Harkup Hackney's ignorance of the world and its ways, his absence of mind, and simple credulity of temper, he was as unfit to be the travelling tutor of the “fast party,” now at Bellevue Villa, as the Dominie of immortal memory himself.

But the dons of his college wished to serve Hackney ; they valued him ; his scholarship



made him invaluable, as a tutor, to those who wished really to profit by his coaching ; and the young Marquis was so convinced that "no end of fun" would be the result of old Hackney-Coach's travelling tour, that he at once decided that Hackney was the man.

The history of old Hackney-Coach's long engagement was well known to the "fast," jeering young set he attended ; and he, in his honest, simple heart, believed their interest and sympathy sincere ; and when they, in derision, toasted Prudence Pryme, his red, weak eyes would fill with tears, as, bowing all round and standing up, he would say, "Prudence ! God bless her, and keep her, and make us happy together !"

To Arthur and Edith, this constant and deep attachment was intensely interesting ; and they did all they could to shield old Hackney-Coach from his pupils' ridicule, and to prevent his discovering that they were

making him and his Prudence the butts of their poor, heartless wit. They need not have feared for him ; he never suspected evil or falsehood in any one.

However, the great interest which Arthur took in old Hackney-Coach made Roger Croft, who hated the former with the bitterest hatred, and the young Marquis, who was very jealous of Arthur on Edith's account, determined to postpone, if possible, to an indefinite period, the union that now seemed to be fast approaching. Making Bellevue Villa their head-quarters, Roger Croft and the Marquis, who were both fond of play, resolved to vary the scene by adjourning for a week or two to Spa, at which place desperate gambling, in its worst form, was going on.

Roger Croft was one of the most malignant and malicious of men. He disliked old Hackney-Coach for his preference of Arthur—a preference which often sent a flash of

triumph to Edith's eyes and a flush to her cheek.

As for the Marquis, he was idle, rather satirical, very thoughtless where others were concerned; and readily adopted and reproduced as his own a most mischievous plan for postponing *sine die* the union of old Hackney-Coach with his Prudence.

This was nothing less than to get him to the gaming-tables; there, as they knew by experience, the taste for gambling, inherent in all of "woman born," would be excited; and whether, in the first instance, he lost or won, he was equally certain to persevere.

Now, had Hackney been even a wicked man of the world, he would not, on any account (as a travelling tutor) have shown himself openly at a gambling-table, whatever he might have done in private; but he was so simple, so confiding, and so unsuspecting, that when the young Marquis and Roger Croft,

pretending to be very much interested about his union with his Prudence, showed him a number of bank-notes and napoleons, which they pretended to have won at the tables, and prophesied that, in one hour there, he would obtain the needful sum (without any one being at all the poorer, since it was a Government concern), old Hackney-Coach at once fell into the snare ; and without leaving him time to reflect, they hastily converted him into an *élégant*, by putting on him a surtout of the Marquis's (who was very tall), a tie of Roger Croft's, and a "tile," as he called it, of young Melton's. This done, old Hackney-Coach, in company with all his pupils, left the bright, sunny day and the open air, and was soon, with a card and a purse in his hand, seated between the young Marquis and Roger Croft at a long table, at which were crowded pale, hollow-eyed, anxious, spell-bound slaves of the Demon of Play.

Hour after hour there they remained, lost to everything but the chances of the game. There were women—young, fair women, looking old and ugly, with their intense anxiety—women who ought to have been angels at home, fast becoming demons there! Young men, who had forsaken the up-hill, thorny path to Fame and Fortune, with the hope of getting rich by one lucky throw; and more than one of whom, having ventured their all, had in their pockets pistols wherewith, in case of failure, to stifle the voice of Conscience, and to cut short a life of Poverty and Despair.

Old Hackney-Coach at first won. He went on, on, on, and had very nearly made himself master of the sum necessary to enable him at once to reward his Prudence for the patient constancy of a long life. His eyes were on fire, his cheek was flushed, his heart beat high—when lo! a turn of Fortune's wheel,

and he lost all!—all his winnings, and much of his original stock!

By this time it was dark outside, and the lamps were lighted; and still on, on, on, played poor Hackney-Coach! The young Marquis, Roger Croft, and the rest, were gone to a *restaurateur's* close by to dine, but Hackney would not stir. Suddenly Hackney thought he detected some sleight-of-hand with regard to the dice. Maddened by his losses, he rose, collared the *croupier*, and demanded to be allowed to examine a die which the latter had thrust into his pocket, and which Hackney declared was loaded. The whole table, upon this, rose in tumult; a furious scuffle ensued between Hackney and the *croupier*; two of the gamblers fell to the ground, as the combatants, in their fierce struggle, upset their chairs. Suddenly the *croupier* drew a stiletto from his breast, and was about to stab Hackney to the heart, when the latter

wrenched it from him, and he would probably have killed him then and there, but that two of the gamblers, seeing the *croupier's* danger, caught Hackney by the coat-tails, and held him forcibly back. Even with such odds against him, old Hackney-Coach, maddened by his losses, and the cheating to which he owed them, and which he felt certain he had detected, was a very dangerous opponent; and, as he was still armed with the poniard which he had wrenched from the *croupier*, there would certainly have been bloodshed, had not the young Marquis and the rest of the party returned.

Of course, as Englishmen, they gloried in "a fight," and the certainty of thrashing the "foreigners;" as men, they could not but stand by and back up their tutor, old Hackney-Coach. All he insisted upon was his right to examine the die through which he had been robbed of the savings of a life.

As all connected with the gaming-house resisted what they knew would ruin the character of their establishment, the Marquis, a great bruiser, brought his fists to bear upon the sallow faces of the gamblers. All his party followed his example; Hackney especially engaging with the *croupier*, who soon gave in, when he saw his blood, which the Marquis called his "claret," soaking his embroidered shirt-front, as it gushed from his cut lip and broken nose.

Before the police arrived, Hackney had possessed himself of the loaded dice. All the parties were taken before the *Juge de Paix—Anglice*, magistrate. The *croupier* was convicted of cheating; old Hackney-Coach received back all his money, and, in the end, the *croupier* was sent to the galleys.

Old Hackney-Coach, when he once again clutched the savings of a life, registered a solemn vow, that as it was his first, so it should



be his last visit to a gaming-table ; and nothing that the young Marquis or his imitators could say ever elicited any reply beyond, "*Experientia docet.*"

As there was something generous about the young Marquis, he resolved to atone to old Hackney-Coach for the agony he had caused him, by himself, at the termination of the tour, making up the sum which the curate, old Peter Pryme, required Hackney to settle on his bride ; and this being communicated to Prudence, she is working hard at her *trousseau* ; and the constant old Hackney-Coach sees, at length, vividly before him, the much longed-for end of his "coaching-days," and the kind wife and happy home he has looked forward to for thirty years !

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. Croft and her daughters were much disappointed at the result of the visit of Roger,

the young Marquis, and his "fast set" at Bellevue Villa.

Miss Croft, Almeria, and Gloriana, were all pretty enough to have made some impression on any *but* "fast men;" but, in addition to the selfish callousness to the charms of *ladies* that distinguishes such natures, they were all, in this and every other respect, such imitators of their young and noble leader, that they all admired Edith, and that exclusively.

Before their departure for Spa, and after their return, their eyes were all fixed on her, because on her his lordship gazed so admiringly. On her every kind of attention was lavished; the chair or couch on which she sat became a throne, around which a little Court was formed.

Very disagreeable was all this to Edith, who found herself thus shut out from the only one she wished to have near her; and reviving (in spite of recent reflection, remorse, and

repentance) all the demons of fury, jealousy, rage, and detraction, even in the bosom of Gloriana, the most amiable, or rather the least unamiable, of the Croft family. Even old Hackney-Coach, when he returned, found himself irresistibly attracted to Edith's side; she was so full of gentleness and sympathy, and the Misses Croft were so affected, so unreal, so cold, and so scornful to Roger's tutor.

Mr. Croft was very seldom with his wife and family; he had a great deal to do in England in the affairs of the old Earl and the management of the estate. Besides, he was growing old, and old trees do not bear transplanting. After the first novelty was over, continental life became odious to him. He missed his office; he could not occupy, he could not amuse himself. He hated foreign cookery, whether French, German, or Italian; he hated cheap French wines—they disagreed

with him. He liked his old crusty port, his roast beef, his fat capons; the long-legged, sinewy, half-starved poultry abroad, and the tough, dark, stringy meat, disgusted him.

He was very glad to get back to Croft Villa, and Mrs. Croft was not sorry to get rid of him; for he grumbled incessantly, and was for ever imploring her return to her country and her home.

Meanwhile, the vacation came to an end. Old Hackney-Coach and all his pupils returned to Oxford. The Marquis was as good as his word—Harkup Hackney gave up coaching; he repaired to the parsonage where Prudence dwelt with her old father the curate. The required sum was settled on Prudence, and in his own little church old Peter Pryme united the hands of those whose hearts had resisted the power of absence, time, chance, and change to sever them.

The bride felt she was too old for brides-

maids, a veil, an orange-blossom wreath, favours, or a carriage and four. In a quiet, grey silk, and a neat white bonnet, with a soft veil, Prudence walked to church with Harkup Hackney, her only unmarried sister being present. The happy pair then returned to the parsonage to partake of a quiet, comfortable breakfast ; after which, the bride and bridegroom, accompanied by the sister of the former—a pleasing old maid—set off in a fly for the station ; Miss Mercy Pryme being, according to the fashion of a former day, included in the wedding excursion—a great delight to her, for both she and the bride were going to London for the first time in their old lives. They were going to see all the wonders of which country people think so much, and Londoners so little :—St. Paul's, the Monument, Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Lords and Commons, the Crystal Palace, Madame Tussaud's, the Zoological Gardens, the

---

South Kensington Museum, the theatres, Astley's, Cremorne—everything! And Mercy, who, five years younger than the bride, was (as Roger Croft observed) “no chicken for all that,” yet entertained a hope that, among the myriads of marrying men with which London swarms, she might find a husband, and was in the very highest, almost hoydenish, spirits.

Harkup (who no longer deserves the nickname of “Old Hackney-Coach”) was extremely kind and liberal; and a happier wedding-party never set out than that which consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Hackney, and Miss Mercy Pryme. They were borne in the slow, old, prim fly to the swift train, which by nightfall conveyed them to London, where a cab deposited them at an hotel in Covent Garden.

## CHAPTER II.

“Child no more! I love, and I am woman!”

RICHELIEU.

THE winter passed quietly away at Bellevue Villa, after the “fast set,” Arthur, and Hackney had left it. The spring followed, enlivened for Edith by memories of the sweet past, and bright hopes for a sweeter future. But it was very dull for the Misses Croft, who began to feel that they were wasting some of the best years of their lives in a beautiful and silvan, but monotonous seclusion. Urged on by her own maternal ambition and her daughters’ discontent, Mrs. Croft resolved to quit the villa, which she had taken chiefly from

motives of economy ; and as English travellers were beginning to enliven the hotels, the streets, the mountains, the lakes, and the forests of beautiful Switzerland, the Misses Croft then began to tease their mamma to let them set out again on their travels.

“So many girls have made conquests in trains, steam-boats, and at *table-d’hôtes*,” said Miss Croft.

“Emily Wiggins got herself engaged to that millionaire, Mr. Green, while they were weatherbound together at the Convent of the Great St. Bernard ; and both the Grotes got married to men whom they met at Interlachen—very good matches, too,” said Gloriana ; “while Penelope Perkins induced young Lord Ulster to propose by crossing the *Mer de Glace*, and ascending Mont Blanc with him. It’s all very well for Edith Lorraine to be content, sitting in these dull forests, gathering wild strawberries, and sketching the distant



Alps. She's a lord's daughter, and every man seems to fall in love with her. She can have her choice, from the Marquis downwards ; but we must look out, and that pretty sharp, too, unless we mean, like Miss Pryme, to be brides of fifty."

"Oh!" said Miss Croft, "Roger, who, for reasons of his own, wants to marry Edith—not for love, I promise you—set the fashion of admiring her. He pretends to be ruled by the Marquis, but in reality he rules him and the whole rude odious set. As for Melton, Danvers, Young, and Melville, they 'follow their leader' like so many sheep. I never was so mortified in my life as when I saw evening after evening passed by all those one-idea'd imitative fools in worshipping Edith Lorraine, and the little pale idiot so stuck-up by it all."

"No, no!" said Gloriana; "you wrong her there. I think she despised every one of them—Arthur always excepted. Oh, she's

over head and ears in love with him ; but I must do her the justice to say, she treated all the 'fast set' very coldly."

"And so must I," said Almeria ; "and well they deserve the contempt of all woman-kind."

"Ah !" laughed the saucy Gloriana, "I fear, in your case, sister, it was the fox and the grapes!"

Almeria walked away, tossing her pretty head, and muttering—

"The fox and the grapes indeed ! Why, any man of good taste would say that I've a much finer figure, and a much handsomer face, than Edith. What they can see in her I cannot imagine !"

\* \* \* \* \*

The long vacation found Edith, Mrs. Croft, and her daughters on their travels once more. The young Marquis, Arthur, and Roger Croft

were to join them at Interlachen. His lordship had found out the truth of the old song—

“Absence makes the heart grow fonder;”

and, as our young aristocrats are not much used to practise patience where passion is concerned, he had resolved—and that resolve he had confided to Roger Croft—that Edith should be his before another summer came round.

Edith, who had not seen her beloved since the Christmas holidays, was in an inward ecstasy; and the Misses Croft, who had wisely given up all hopes of the Marquis, were all in high spirits; for each had, or fancied she had, an admirer in a party of young fellows in extra English travelling costume, who either followed or met them everywhere; while a set of foreigners were also making love, by glances, sighs, and little delicate manœuvres, to the

three Croft Graces. For foreigners fancy that every travelling English family must be very wealthy, and every trussed-up miss in her turban hat, scarlet petticoat, Zouave jacket, and Balmoral boots, a great catch.

Edith, who lived with, but yet apart from, these commonplace girls—Edith, whose life was an inner life of poetry, love, devotion, and constancy—she, of course, might have had her share, and more than her share, in all this folly and flirtation; but there was a virgin modesty, a dignified reserve, a lady-like tranquillity about her, which (much as they admired her grace and beauty) kept in awe the Regent-street gents and the fortune-hunting foreigners.

By dint of constantly ascending the same mountains, visiting the same ruins, sailing on the same lakes, and picnicking in the same forests, the Crofts, the Regent-street gents, and the foreigners have all become acquainted.

The Crofts were a little disappointed when they discovered that the gents, whom they, in their inexperience, had judged by their dress and their airs to be young noblemen, or baronets at the very least, were only plain *Messieurs*, and that their names were by no means aristocratic. They affected such military airs, moustachios, and conversation on drill, reviews, uniforms, leave, &c., &c., that Mrs. Croft and her daughters had hoped they were guardsmen. Alas! alas! they were only—— But we will not anticipate.

Miss Croft's especial admirer was a Mr. Tippet, Almeria's beau was Mr. Cutts, and Gloriana's, Mr. Blower. But then, on the other hand, Le Comte Gonzalve de Saint Ventadour, Le Baron Leopold de Château Rouge, and Le Viscomte Amédée de la Vallée Noire, were at hand, ready to atone, as far as name, title, and illustrious descent went, for the plebeianism of the English admirers. True,

the young Englishmen were much cleaner, nicer, and evidently better provided with linen and cash than their foreign rivals; but in spite of Shakespeare's exclamation, "What's in a name?" the Misses Croft were much excited by the idea of La Comtesse de Saint Ventadour, La Baronne de Château Rouge, and La Viscomtesse de la Vallée Noire, as opposed to Mrs. Tippit, Mrs. Cutts, and Mrs. Blower.

How it would all end, no one could foresee; but although, before this rivalry in the favour of the Misses Croft set in, the gents and the foreigners had been very friendly, there was now something sulky about the former, and something fierce and belligerent in the manners of the latter, which boded a rupture, if not worse.

Arthur had been a fortnight at Interlachen with his soul's idol, when the young Marquis, Roger Croft, and the rest of the imitative "fast set" arrived.

The Misses Croft were very proud to show off before those who had so slighted them, the rival adoration of the little host of aspirants who attended them everywhere.

The "fast set" treated with supreme contempt and *hauteur* the presumption of a Mr. Tippet, a Mr. Cutts, and a Mr. Blower, whom, however, they had as yet only heard of, in presuming to sit down in the presence of ladies whom they honoured with their acquaintance; and the Marquis, who was very fond of quizzing, greatly exasperated the Misses Croft by his jokes about their having two strings to their bow, and two *beaux* to their string—such as they were.

As for the foreign brigade, the "fast set" decided at once that they were mere hair-dressers or glovers, and that if they were Roger Croft, they would soon kick such snobs down-stairs. They tried to rouse Roger to this dangerous enterprise, but in vain; Roger

was equally afraid of his sisters and their suitors. The "gents" had made themselves scarce, as the "fast set" said, since the arrival of the young Marquis; a great disappointment this to his lordship, who expected no little sport in quizzing the snobs.

The Marquis was so devoted to Edith, and his imitators followed her up so closely, that she had seldom an opportunity of exchanging a word with her heart's idol, except when they met in an early morning ramble in the exquisite mountain scenery of Interlachen. All the "fast set" were very late risers. Arthur and Edith were up betimes, and often saw the sun rise in that land of enchantment, and felt, as hand-in-hand they watched him flooding the lake with roses and crowning the mountains with gold and sapphires, that just such had been on their hearts, and their young lives, the Dawn of Love.

One day—one very bright and glorious



day—an excursion to scale the mountains in search of a rare plant was planned by our travellers. And as a good dinner is included in all English arrangements, Mrs. Croft proposed that the excursion should be turned into a picnic, and that the gentlemen should supply plenty of champagne, she undertaking that there should be an agreeable variety of cold lamb, roast beef, lobster salad, chickens, tongue, pigeon-pie, jelly, blanc-mange, and fruit pies. The foreign brigade and the “gents” were invited to join the picnic. The Marquis anticipated great fun from the presence of the latter; but, to his annoyance, and the great disappointment of the ladies, they did not, as Roger Croft said, “show up” on the occasion. Miss Croft, who really was in love with Mr. Tippit, pleaded a severe head-ache, and excused herself from joining the party, and they set out without her.

Nothing could exceed the beauty of the

mountains, the fragrance of the air, the enchantment of the scenery, the soft shadows on the sides of the hills, the dark chasms between the steep, almost perpendicular ridges, the soft beauty of the Alpine rose, the little dells full of starry wild-flowers and moist green moss, the silver rills that trickled down the rough cheeks of the crags, and formed cool, deep pools, where the fish loved to dwell; the hardy trees, whose dark brown roots seemed part of the rocky substance in which they were embedded, but whose light green leaves and fantastic branches gave such grace and beauty to the scenery. Nature, in her wildest moods, had piled up these perpendicular cliffs, and tried to conceal their perilous depths by verdure and bloom.

Mrs. Croft insisted on guides, mules, and everything that could ensure safety, much to the annoyance of the young Marquis and his "fast set," who, without knowing anything

about it, were yet so full of conceit that they declared they could answer for the safety of the ladies "without the bother of *those regular do's*," the hired guides. However, Mrs. Croft was resolute; and our travellers, *minus* "the gents" and Miss Croft, set off in high spirits.

The Marquis and all his "set" kept close to Edith's mule, much to her annoyance and to the exclusion of her Arthur, who did not like to make their mutual attachment the subject of the Marquis's quizzing and the comments of his "set" by taking advantage of her preference, to lead her mule himself. But for the "foreign brigade," the Misses Croft would have been left entirely to the tender mercies of the muleteers.

The absence of the "gents" was a great blow to the belles. Had they known the secret of that absence, it would have been greater still; as it was, they were piqued and

mortified, and the Baron de Château Rouge and the Vicomte de la Vallée Noire took advantage of the occasion, and made rapid strides in the favour of Almeria and Gloriana Croft.

As for Roger, he, having no belle to beguile for him the steep ascent, voted the whole thing "no end of bore," and wished he could kick all picnics into the middle of next week. He did not dare intrude on Edith in the young Marquis's presence; and so, that time might not be lost, he kept close to Mrs. Croft, consulting with her about ways and means, and how he was to push his own fortunes with Edith, when she had, as he felt certain she would, rejected the young Marquis.

\* \* \* \* \*

The muleteers guided the party to a convenient flat, on the top of a height, where the dinner was spread. Everything was excellent, including the appetites excited by the

pure mountain breeze. Nothing was forgotten, not even the salt. Roger, who had an odious habit of making stale puns, let off a succession ; asking Edith if she would have “ a merry thought, and some tongue to give it utterance ;” offering a “ rib ” to the Baron, and pie to his mamma, who was, he said, always *pieously* disposed. “ Stout to the stout,” he said to Melton, who was very fat, and therefore did not like the joke ; and “ sweets to the sweet,” as he proffered some jelly to Edith.

All the “ fast set ” voted him a great bore ; and the Marquis, advising the ladies to take refuge in the sparkle of the champagne from the dulness of Croft’s stale, flat, and unprofitable jokes, imbibed a good deal of his favourite beverage himself ; and in this, as in everything else, the “ fast set ” followed his example.

At length the guides and Mrs. Croft began

to think it was high time to prepare to set out home ; and a little stroll among the cliffs was proposed previous to remounting the mules. Edith, hoping to be able to exchange a few words with Arthur, left the noisy, excited set, busy with a bet between the Marquis and Roger Croft, and strolled away in search of an Alpine rose ; while the Croft girls were flirting with the Baron and the Count, and Mrs. Croft finishing her last glass of champagne. Arthur was gone to see to the safety of Edith's saddle, and to give the guides leave to sup on the relics of the feast. He then meant to try to get a few moments' *tête-à-tête* with Edith, from whom he had been cruelly severed throughout the whole day.

The ladies had all agreed to dispense with hoops and crinolines, as, in riding on mules, and climbing mountains and rocks, such appendages were found a nuisance and an im-

pediment ; and Edith, in her soft flowing drapery of delicate white muslin, looked, as she moved among the dark crags, picking her way along the narrow path, like some mountain nymph or guardian spirit of the spot.

Presently Edith heard steps approaching ; her heart beat quick—it must be Arthur ! She turned to meet him. But, no ; it was the young Marquis, flushed, excited, emboldened by champagne, and resolved, there and then, to declare his passion, and to make Edith an offer of his hand and fortune.

Edith resolved to avoid him, and, without a thought of the perilous nature of the mountain passes, wound sharply round an angle of the crag, picked her way down a sharp declivity, and was soon lost to his view. He gazed, he murmured, he cursed his fate, and swore at himself and destiny in vain. Nowhere could he see that enchanting form !

\* \* \* \* \*

The guides grew impatient. Mrs. Croft and her daughters were mounted. It was getting dusk. Everyone was ready to set off, and still Edith Lorraine came not.

White and cold with terror, Arthur rushed about, regardless of his own safety, shouting aloud the "one loved name;" and echo, only, answered to his call. Mrs. Croft, the girls, the Marquis, even Roger, the "fast set," and the foreigners, who had made sure that Edith was hiding in sport, now began to exchange blank looks of terror, and to tremble and grow pale. The guides shook their heads. There was a fatal spot not far off where several accidents had happened—one very recently. They had ropes and lanterns, they never ascended these heights without, but they were of no use, since there was no trace or indication of Edith's whereabouts.

Presently Arthur's shout was heard. The



guides, who knew whence the sound came, exclaimed in Swiss,

“Blessed Virgin preserve us ! It is the Death Valley ! He is shouting from the rocks above it !”

Again came Arthur’s shout on their startled ears ; and still they moved not. Arthur in a few moments came back, deadly white—his eyes on fire, his hair on end.

“I have seen her !” he said. “She has fallen from a high crag into a dark, deep chasm ; but I can see the gleam of a white dress ! What is to be done ?”

The guides shook their heads.

“Nothing can be done ; she is dead by this time,” said one of them ; “and it is useless to risk the life of living men to save a dead woman !”

“I will give a thousand pounds—nay, two thousand pounds—to the guide who tries to save her, or who brings her up, dead or .

alive!" said the young Marquis, trembling violently.

The men shook their heads. "What is the use of money to dead men?" they murmured.

"Fools! cowards! brutes!" said Arthur, "I will risk what you, mountain-born, misnamed guides, shrink from! Follow me, and obey silently and promptly all my commands!"

They have reached the crag: down, down, down, deep in the darkness below, the gleam of the white dress is seen.

"Now, the strongest of your ropes!"

It was produced.

"Now your lantern!"

The guides gave it into Arthur's eager hand.

"Now you, my lord, and you all, help these men to hold fast this rope. Do not *you* give way—be sure *I* will not. Father in heaven,

give me strength to save her ! If not, blessed Jesus, receive my spirit !”

With the lantern in his bosom, and the rope fast clutched in both his hands, Arthur swung himself at one fling half-way down the chasm. There he paused, gaining a momentary footing on a sloping ledge of the cliff. More eagerly then, he peered into the dark chasm, and saw the form of Edith senseless at the bottom. He placed the lantern on a projecting angle of the rock, and by the aid of the thick rope, he went down, down, down to the bottom of the dark abyss.

Edith lay, white as her dress, and perfectly insensible, on a bed of moss, withered leaves, and loose earth. A wild hope that no bones were broken, no blood shed, filled Arthur's heart, and nerved him afresh. He threw one strong, brave arm (his left arm) round the slight form, and with his right hand he still clutched the rope. The Marquis, the guides, and all

the men on the top of the crag, pulled bravely and well; and “a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether,” at intervals, drew Arthur and his lovely burden (still quite insensible in his embrace) out of the ravine. Midway, where he left the lantern, he obtained a moment’s footing, and—oh, joy! oh, rapture!—he thought he felt the dear heart faintly flutter beneath his hand.

Ah! what a prayer of faith and gratitude was that which rose from Arthur’s heart to the throne of Grace!

It was answered—yes, it *was* answered—as the prayer of faith and gratitude always is! New strength comes to Arthur’s hot, sore, blistered, and almost relaxing hand. New strength is granted to those on the craggy summit who are pulling him up—for they can now see Arthur suspended in mid-air above that black abyss, and Edith in his embrace!

They are saved; oh, rich reward of all-dar-

ing, all-enduring, all-conquering Love! They are drawn to the top—they take her from his arm—they lay her on the ground—he kneels beside her. The Marquis holds his brandy-flask to her lips; Arthur chafes her hands and temples. Her colour returns; she opens her eyes; she smiles on Arthur; she murmurs, “Heaven bless and reward you, Arthur!”

Oh, miracle! oh, ecstasy! she is unhurt! Stunned and insensible, she lay at the bottom of the abyss, and, but for Arthur, would have perished there; but falling on that soft bed of leaves and loose earth, she escaped unhurt; and the story is told to this day by the “Guides,” as the “Miracle of the Mountains;” indeed, they do not scruple to attribute the maiden’s rescue to spiritual agency.

## CHAPTER III.

“They sought her both in bower and ha’—  
The lady was not seen ;  
She’s o’er the Borders and awa’  
Wi’ Jock o’ Hazeldean.”

SCOTCH BALLAD.

EDITH’S miraculous rescue from a horrible and lingering death, and Arthur’s brave and successful venture, formed a nine days’ wonder at Interlachen. The young Marquis, who, as we have said, was not deficient in generosity, and was himself a man of high courage, though not of such an heroic nature as Arthur, took the latter by the hand in every sense of the word.

Arthur could not but smile when the young

peer, with a self-absorption and an egotism perfectly aristocratic, thanked Arthur for Edith's life. Yes, perfectly blind to the fact that the life Arthur had risked his own to save was ten thousand times dearer to him than his own, and entirely engrossed by his own emotions, his own passion, and the misery spared himself, the young Marquis took an opportunity, on their return to the hotel, to say—

“I honour and admire you for your bravery, and I am proud, as an Englishman, that you have done a deed that will be talked of among these Guides and their descendants as long as these mountains stand. I dare say, a hundred years hence, they will have made a fine weird romance of this bold English venture of yours. Indeed, I should myself have acted exactly as you have done” (how many people think this is the highest praise they can bestow, and what intense conceit there is in the notion !)

—“yes, I should have let myself down, as you did, by means of a rope, only that I felt the chances were ten to one in your favour ; and, where Miss Lorraine’s life was concerned, I would not suffer any personal feeling to interfere.” (He has actually made a sort of favour of allowing Edith to be saved by Arthur.) “For compare my weight with yours ; I doubt whether the rope would have borne me at all, even if the men at the top of the crag could have held it. And now, what I have to say is, that I feel under a deep personal obligation to you. Some day I will tell you why ; suffice it at present to say that such is the fact. You may have heard me offer two thousand pounds to any one of those cowardly Guides who would do what you have done. I am not going to affront you, my dear sir, by placing you on a level with them, and offering you a reward of that kind ; but if you have any wish which I



can gratify—any object in life which my interest can enable you to attain—any appointment in view, in obtaining which I can aid you, you have only to remind me of this day, of the glory you have shed over the English name, and the inestimable service you have done to myself individually, as well as to Miss Edith Lorraine, and all her family.”

There was something in the tone and manner of this address, kind and complimentary as it was, that yet did not please Arthur. However, he took kindly what seemed to be so kindly meant, thanked the young Marquis, and got out of his way as soon as possible.

Edith was much too weak to support herself, and sit upright on a mule; but Arthur, who had a suggestive mind and helping hands, contrived a sort of hammock out of some rugs and shawls they had brought with them, and, with the aid of the Guides, carried Edith

safely down the mountain side, and back to Interlachen.

Miss Croft did not appear, as usual, to preside at the well-spread tea-table. The English maid, whom the Crofts had brought with them, announced that Miss Croft had begged she might not be disturbed, as her headache was of a very distressing kind.

Edith Lorraine was at once conveyed to bed, there to ponder, with passionate gratitude and tenderness, on all she owed to Arthur, who, for the second time, had saved her life. If the first time she recalled his devoted watch at her bed-room door with tears, she now dwelt on the daring heroism of his perilous descent with a glow of enthusiastic admiration ; and in the silence of the night—the bright moonlight night, so clear that she could see, as she lay in her bed near the window, the giant mountains and the transparent lake—she registered a solemn vow to

devote to him the life he had twice saved—to repay, with all the love and tenderness of her woman-heart, and all the powers of her mind, soul, and strength, the devotion he had shown her—to let no obstacles, no impediments, no prejudices, ultimately sever her life from his ; but, sooner or later, to reward him with her hand and heart, and, as the wife of his bosom and the partner of his life, to double his every blessing and lighten his every sorrow.

The next morning the Marquis was at the breakfast-table much earlier than usual. He was in very high spirits, and his handsome face betrayed some inward exultation, such as he always evinced when he had some capital joke or choice bit of scandal to repeat at somebody's expense.

Mrs. Croft, who had a passion for peers, always toadied the Marquis to a painful degree.

“Ah!” she said, “my dear Marquis, I see you are brimming over with some capital bit of fun. Now, let us have it, my dear lord; it is running over at those bright eyes, which are destined to break so many hearts. Ah! I can see it stealing out at the corners of your lordship’s mouth. Now, what is it, my dear Marquis? I positively cannot wait. I must have it.”

“Well, so you shall; but first let me ask how Miss Lorraine is?”

“Better, my lord—I thank your lordship for inquiring. Edith is better; but not well enough to appear at breakfast, my lord.”

“And Miss Croft?”

“Oh! I hope she’ll be down presently, my dear lord. And now your lordship must tell us the joke.”

“Well, then, I’ve found out why ‘the gents’ absented themselves yesterday! And,

more than that, I can tell you who and what they are!"

Mrs. Croft turned a little pale. She had greatly encouraged the attentions of Mr. Tippet to her eldest daughter, Miss Croft. Mr. Tippet was a very dressy, fair, delicate young man, of rather pert and off-hand, but effeminate and insinuating manners. He had light curly hair, pretty features, teeth of incomparable beauty, a small straw-coloured moustache, a slight figure, white hands (which he had a habit of rubbing softly), a brilliant wardrobe, choice watch breguet chain, rings, pins, studs, and links.

Mr. Tippet might be a little finnikin, and talk a little too much about the weather, and in a sort of off-hand way about things in general; but he had a great command of money, alluded to many ladies and gentlemen of distinction, as if he were intimate with them, and gave Mrs. Croft a great number of

---

autographs to add to her collection. He had also presented her and her daughters with some very fragrant dentifrice, such as he used himself ; he was good-natured, too, and had very cleverly cured Mrs. Croft and her English maid of a raging toothache, by an application known only to himself.

Miss Croft was desperately in love with him ; and Mrs. Croft, though she did not suppose that a Mr. Tippit could be of a noble family, imagined he might be a gentleman of fortune, and was very anxious to promote the match.

And now the thought of her rashness, her imprudence, blanches her cheek ; for it is evident, from the Marquis's manner, that there is something very much against Tippit—something ludicrous ; what can it be ? The Marquis kept her a long time in suspense. Her anxiety delighted him. He hinted that

he also knew who and what Cutts and Blower were.

At length, when he could keep the joke to himself no longer, the Marquis revealed the terrible discovery in these words :—"Compose yourself, my dear madam ; and first let me assure you that Mr. Tippit is a very respectable and a very wealthy young man, and that he lives in a very handsome house in Bedford Row, Bloomsbury, a house in which his father and grandfather lived before him."

"Thank Heaven for that, my lord ! Your lordship has taken a great weight off my mind," said Mrs. Croft.

"I am glad to hear it," said the Marquis ; "the name of Tippit is one not unknown to fame, either."

"You enchant me, dear Marquis !" said Mrs. Croft ; "I never heard it before I knew this charming young man, excepting always as that of Tippit the dentist, who, when I was

a little girl, used to attend the boarding-school where I was educated, to draw our teeth. Oh! how we all dreaded and hated him! Oh! my lord, how he used to smile and talk of the weather with the terrible key instrument hidden up behind him! Oh! how I loathe a dentist, my dear lord!"

"And yet such is the calling of the gentleman in question. Mr. Tippet is a dentist; nay, more—he is the son of a dentist, the grandson of a dentist. He is not a man of the calibre of Cartwright or Parkinson; but he is a very good, advertising, third-class dentist, in great vogue with the middle classes!"

"Oh! my lord!" cried Mrs. Croft, "how can I thank you for discovering this? Heaven only knows what misfortune you may not have prevented! How did your lordship discover it?"

"Simply thus! My valet, who was taken



ill at Brussels, only joined me yesterday. It seems, after I had set off, he met with Mr. Tippit, who was about to join your picnic with his friends Cutts and Blower. Cutts—you will be amused to hear it—is a very celebrated chiropodist.”

“What is that?” groaned Mrs. Croft.

“A corn-cutter! and Blower is an equally successful maker of artificial legs, arms, eyes, and noses!”

“Oh! what a disgusting set of fellows!” said Mrs. Croft; “I’ll never take the slightest notice of any one of them again; and Gloriana, remember, I forbid you ever even to bow to them. Just go, my love, at once, and tell your sisters what those odious wretches are, and beg them to come down to breakfast. Oh! my lord, what do we not owe to you! No wonder they were ashamed to join our picnic, when they saw they were detected, and knew that your valet would expose them.”

At this moment, in rushed Gloriana, with a note in her hand, pale as death, and trembling violently.

“Good Heavens! what is this?” cried Mrs. Croft, as she tore open the note, and read:—

“BELOVED MAMMA,—Forgive us for anticipating the consent we knew you would not withhold; our chosen lords and masters insist on this proof of our confidence and affection. By the time you receive this, I shall be Mrs. Tippit, and Almeria, Mrs. Cutts—two blessed brides—not noble, not ‘My Lady,’ as you had hoped and planned, but the happy wives of two perfect gentlemen, with plenty to keep us in affluence, and to enshrine us in elegant homes, where our beloved mamma will find she has not lost two daughters, but gained two sons in the persons of those daughters’ husbands. Pray forgive us this once, *and we*

*will never do so any more ; and pray induce dear papa to pardon his*

“BARBARA and ALMERIA.”

“I have gained two sons,—a dentist and a corn-cutter ! Oh ! my lord, I can never survive the disgrace, the shock !” cried Mrs. Croft, and she went off into the strongest hysterics, of the screaming and kicking genus.

It was as the young Marquis had divined. Mr. Tippet with his friends, Messrs. Cutts and Blower, were on their way to their rooms to array themselves in a jaunty, elegant picnic costume, when the former, to his horror, met Mr. Pinkey, his lordship’s valet, whom he could not affect not to know, since not only had Mr. Tippet extracted several huge grinders from Mr. Pinkey’s head, but he had supplied the large bluish-looking incorrodible porcelain

teeth which gave such a strange, unnatural look to Mr. Pinkey's face.

Mr. Tippet felt at once that the game was, as he said, up, unless he could induce Miss Croft to elope with him before it became known, through the Marquis's valet, that the *élégant* of Interlachen was the dentist of Bloomsbury. Taking counsel, therefore, with Messrs. Cutts and Blower, they decided to absent themselves from the picnic, lest Mr. Pinkey should have found some means of betraying their secret.

Mr. Tippet, strong in the confidence of his own charms and his Barbara's attachment, resolved to put it to the test by contriving to despatch a note to her, imploring her not to go on the picnic excursion, but to grant him a meeting on particular business, while her mother, brother, and sisters were absent. This note he conveyed to her by the agency of the laundress.

The result is already known. Mr. Tippet pleaded so eloquently, and looked so charming, that Miss Croft not only agreed to elope with him that very night, but to use her influence with Almeria to accompany her sister, as the bride elect of Mr. Cutts. Mr. Blower would fain have carried off the saucy little Gloriana ; but Miss Croft assured him that any attempt to include her in the bridal party would end in the detection and ruin of the whole scheme ; that Gloriana was the most impracticable little creature in the world, and was quite resolved never to marry anyone but a nobleman ; and that, if she could not get an English peer, she would accept a foreign one—probably the Count, the Vicomte, or the Baron, now of the mountain picnic party with her.

Miss Croft was right ; nothing would have induced Gloriana to elope with Mr. Blower.

She had some heart, and some principle, and some feminine delicacy, too, acquired through her intimacy with Edith Lorraine.

## CHAPTER IV.

" 'Twas the dead of the night when Agatha stole  
From beneath her mother's eye,  
And she paused not to mark the light clouds roll  
O'er the queen of the midnight sky."

ANON.

If the elopement scheme had been proposed to Gloriana, she would certainly have put a stop to it by at once informing her mother of the plot.

Almeria, on the contrary, vain and romantic, at once entered into her sister's views. And in the dead of the night these two dupes, fancying themselves heroines of romance, stole down, in veils and mantles, to join their lovers by the margin of the lake; and, as they were both of age, they were, in

the course of a few days, married in the Ambassador's Chapel at Paris, and Mr. and Mrs. Tippet, and Mr. and Mrs. Cutts, resolved to spend their honeymoon in the French city of delights.

Roger Croft, who was very weary of mountains, forests, and lakes, made the elopement of his sisters an excuse for a visit to Paris.

"Odious as the connection is," he said to his mother, "it is yet quite necessary that I, as the only brother of these treacherous romantic dupes, should ascertain that they are really married, and, if so, it is something to be well rid of them. Both Tippet and Cutts are evidently very well off, and I dare say Barbara and Almeria will drive in their own carriage and pair; and their conduct, at once so rash, so sly, and so undutiful, gives you and my father a good excuse for refusing them any kind of *trousseau* or marriage por-



tion ; at the same time, it may be very convenient to you to make an hotel of their houses whenever you want to stay in town."

" Oh, don't speak of it !" exclaimed Mrs. Croft, with well-acted horror ; " do you imagine, Roger, that I could ever bear to visit at a house outside which was one of those disgusting pictures of a naked foot, with some loathsome excrescence, and a hand holding a sharp instrument just about to make an incision ? No, I could neither rest, eat, drink, nor sleep in so degraded a home ; why, I should see that horrid foot and hand in my dreams, and then wake to the consciousness that that hand was the hand of my son-in-law, and that that foot belonged to any chance customer who chose to be operated upon. A corn-cutter call me mother ! a chronologist call my daughter his wife !"

" Not a chronologist ; a chiropodist, mamma."

“Well, no matter, it’s all one; I knew it was one of the *ists*. Oh, it will drive me mad! Nor is it less painful to me to think of staying with Barbara. No doubt that vile Tippit has a brass plate on his door—MR. TIPPIT, DENTIST; and, of course, a glass case, full of grinning rows of white teeth with pink gums! I, who have good old border blood in my veins—I, a Foster of Foster, to be disgraced and degraded thus!”

“Well, mamma, I must be off; I must just ascertain the fact that the fools are married, and then I will return to you. Don’t fret; they are off our hands, without portions, *trousseaux*, or even the expense of a wedding-breakfast. Gloriana must marry well; and if Edith gets the old Earl’s wealth, and I get Edith—(Lady Edith she must be in due time)—you need never give a thought to Mrs. Tippit and Mrs. Cutts, except when you want,

as I said before, to avoid the expense of a lodging or an hotel in London."

\* \* \* \* \*

Roger Croft delighted in Paris. He loved play, dissipation, and good living; Paris, therefore, was to him a sensual Paradise. He ascertained, without any difficulty, that his sisters were actually married, and then he gave himself up to amusement and pleasure of every kind. He had no wish to see the brides; on the contrary, he was very anxious to keep out of the way of his plebeian brothers-in-law, for there were some "nobs" at Paris whom he had known at Eton, and Roger wanted to be thought as grand and as exclusive as possible.

Meanwhile, the sister brides were much happier in their choice than such undutiful runaway daughters deserved to be.

We have not a word to say in extenuation

or excuse of the conduct of any girl so lost to the sense of filial duty and maiden modesty as to take the most important step in life, and rush into a husband's arms, without the sanction and support of her mother's presence.

Filial treachery and ingratitude are always punished, sooner or later ; the thankless runaway daughter generally finds herself, in her turn, deceived, deserted, and defied by her children. But at present all is *couleur de rose* ; for Mr. Tippit and Mr. Cutts—the dentist and the corn-cutter—spend freely abroad the money they earned at home. They are proud of their union with the Croft family. Grander husbands would have been much more stingy, perhaps, and would have looked down on Croft of Croft Villa. A solicitor seemed somebody to Mr. Tippit and Mr. Cutts ; he would have been worse than a nobody to an honourable or a baronet.

One day, Almeria was slightly indisposed, and Cutts remained at home to read to her, to nurse her, and to comfort her. Tippit, as it was very fine, proposed to his Barbara a ramble in the woods of St. Germain's. Blower, who was very much out of spirits, and fancied himself crossed in love, was to drive with them to the forest, and be of their party, on condition that he did not interfere with them, but amused himself with his own thoughts, his own resources. The latter consisted chiefly in bon-bons, chocolate, and biscuits, with which he filled his pockets, and solaced his palate, if not his heart.

It was a day of unclouded splendour; the fine old trees were in full leaf, the sky was of the richest blue, the wild flowers, in every lovely variety of shape and hue, carpeted the forest. Tippit and his bride sauntered about in the cool fragrant shade of the noble old trees till they were tired, and

then they sank down to rest on the trunk of a felled oak ; Mr. Blower, of whose vicinity they were unaware, having seated himself at a little distance, where, shrouded from their view by the underwood, he was munching his biscuits and bon-bons, and thinking of his lost Gloriana.

Mrs. Tippet was not a regular beauty, but she was a fine, well-grown, blooming young woman, with rich brown hair, which she wore floating down her back ; and, in our opinion, Love is such a beautifier, that, under its influence, Barbara, what with the light in her eyes and the blush on her cheek, looked very lovely as she sat by her Tippet's side, her head resting on his shoulder, and his arm round her trim and shapely waist. We have said that, all dentist as he was, there was something elegant and interesting about Mr. Tippet. Both bride and bridegroom had thrown their hats on the ground, and his fair, curling

hair contrasted well with her dark brown tresses. He was very much in love with Barbara, and she idolized him, and they were very happy—happy almost as the first pair—as they talked of past fears, present joys, and future prospects, in all the exaggeration and sweet tautology of love—when a gentleman on horseback, but whose steed's hoofs fell unheard on that soft velvet sod, passed at a little distance, and caught a distinct view of the loving young couple.

“Hang it! ’tis Barbara, and that snob of a dentist,” murmured the equestrian. “What a fool she is, and what a pair of spoons they look! Well, I’m glad I’ve seen them, because now I know how to avoid them. It would be a fine thing if Arlington, or Yorke, or Porchester, or Charley Ord, or Lord Harry, were to see me in company with a dentist, and find out that the snob’s my brother-in-law! No—‘forewarned is forearmed,’ I’ll turn my horse’s

head, and just canter away as quickly and as quietly as possible."

So saying, the *affectionate* brother fled the spot, and the young pair, conscious of nothing but each other's presence, and the love that drew their hearts so closely together, wanted no third person to break in on their happy *tête-à-tête*, and Barbara's head still rested on Tippit's breast, although he had taken that opportunity to reveal to her who and what he really was. He had dreaded the result of that disclosure, but without cause. When once a woman really loves a man, no outward circumstances can disenchant or estrange her :

"I know that I love thee whatever thou art,"

is still the burden of her song.

Barbara now knows that her husband is Tippit, the celebrated Bloomsbury dentist, and she has not lifted her cheek from his shoulder nor withdrawn her waist from his embrace.



Arm in arm they left a silvan spot worthy to be the scene of *As You Like It*—to have sheltered Rosalind, and seen Jaques couched on its sod. And Tippit took his bride to dine at the Palais Royal—such a choice little dinner, and such creams and ices! Then they went to one of the *Théâtres des Variétés*; and she liked being the dentist's wife better than being the neglected, lonely daughter of the stuck-up Mrs. Croft.

## CHAPTER V.

"Oh, happy they, the happiest of their kind,  
Whom gentle stars unite!"

THOMSON.

WE cannot afford to spend much time in London with the bridal party ; but we hope our readers share our interest in dear, simple, constant old Hackney-Coach sufficiently to wish to know how he, his elderly bride, and her spinster sister got on in London, and whether the delights of the great metropolis equalled their expectations. To old Hackney-Coach, himself, the scene was, as he demurely said, by no means so new as it was to his womankind. He had often been in London before ; and—like all true scholars—he was

so much absorbed in thought, so absent, and so unobservant of outward objects, that London differed from Oxford, for him, only in the constant risks he incurred of being run over, and the countless shoves, pushes, and anathemas, lavished upon him for not getting out of the way, and not seeing who and what was coming.

Mrs. Hackney and her sister, Miss Grace Pryme, were resolved to be delighted with everything and everybody. They would not own to themselves that, after the sweet country, and the exquisite neatness, cleanliness, and fragrance of the old rectory in which their curate father lived, and where they had been born and bred, the hotel in Covent Garden seemed dark, close, dingy, and smelt of gas and stale tobacco; that a very disagreeable odour of cabbages, no longer in their prime, came in when they opened their window; that the close bedrooms and dingy

beds did not, for some reason or other, yield them the sweet, refreshing, undisturbed sleep they always enjoyed at Lonecliffe; that their nights were invaded by nameless visitants, and their complexions did not look as clear in the morning as it was their wont to do; that their bridal finery was rapidly becoming exchanged for the dark livery of London; that they were dizzy with the incessant noises; that they were frightfully overcharged for stale eggs, tough steaks, sky-blue milk, and hot, heady wine; that they were bewildered, stared at, laughed at, and ridiculed when they walked; and cheated, and often abused, into the bargain, when they took refuge in a cab. They were resolved to find everything delightful; for were they not actually in London at last? Had they not realised the dream of a life—a visit to the metropolis?

Mrs. Hackney and Miss Grace Pryme were not at all aware that their home-made bridal

bonnets, mantles, and dresses, made in the fashion of bygone days, appeared singular and ludicrous in London, where fashion reigns with such absolute sway over all ranks and classes.

The lady who set the fashions at Lonecliffe was the squire's wife, one Mrs. Oldaker, who, some thirty years before, had arrived there as a bride, in a huge French bonnet, a short dress, with *gigot* sleeves, and a little tippet. This lady visited nobody out of her own immediate neighbourhood, and had never changed the shape of her bonnet or her dress. In that remote nook by the North Sea, and on the Borders, the scanty female population of the higher class thought themselves "quite the thing," while, in imitation of Mrs. Oldaker, they sported their huge bonnets, their *gigôts*, and short petticoats. Perfectly guiltless were they of hoops, crinolines, long trains, and peaked bonnets. The mere ab-

sence of crinoline or hoops would have made them seem like caricatures of the Past, in a place where (even at all risks) the cook cleaning the door-steps, the housemaid sweeping the stairs, and the nursery-maid impelling the perambulator, all adopt the inconvenient appendages for which the female mind has such a passion, that it is on record that some of the younger penitents at Millbank and elsewhere, have been known to rob the water-butt of its hoops to transfer them to their own dresses, rather than appear before "the Board," hoopless! But when, in addition to this singular omission, the large coalskuttle bonnet, short skirts, huge *gigot* sleeves, sandalled shoes, and little tippets are added to the absurdities of Mrs. Hackney's and Miss Pryme's costume, the ridicule they excited in the streets of London can be understood. Old Hackney-Coach, however, saw nothing ludicrous in the appearance of his

bride and her sister. The faces under those huge old-fashioned bonnets were the same kind, simple faces that had looked lovingly on him for twenty-five years ; those *gigot* sleeves were associated with his earliest dreams of love ; that short waist was the only one his arm had ever encircled. To him, whatever was peculiar to his Prudence and her sister, was dear and beautiful with the poetry of sentiment.

The bride and her sister were a little vain—few women are not so ; and it is a mistake to imagine that a lonely, secluded country life is unfavourable to the growth of this foible. It is in cities, where the beauty of one woman is constantly and unexpectedly surpassed by that of another, and the most elegant and costly dress that one can devise, is outdone by that of another who has hit upon something more costly and elegant still, that Vanity is crushed, mortified, killed ! The

pretty girl or woman of the upper classes in the country sees no rivals, exaggerates her charms, contrasts her delicacy and elegance with the coarse dress and features of the sun-burnt peasantry, lingers over her looking-glass in the long, lonely, listless hours, and persuades herself she is a Venus.

The bride and her sister had been very pretty girls. It was so long ago that all but themselves had forgotten it—old Hackney-Coach always excepted, who saw no change in them. They thought themselves beauties still, and they actually attributed the notice they excited to their charms. Happy in this delusion, they retrimmed their huge bonnets—the bride with orange flowers and white satin ribbon, the bridesmaid with white roses and sarsnet ditto; they had their white dresses washed, and their frilled tippetts clear starched; and they never thought of adopting any other costume, or of encumbering them-



selves with hoops, crinolines, or long petticoats.

One day, that they were delighting themselves with the animals at the Zoological Gardens, and that Miss Pryme especially was enchanted with the playful tricks of the monkeys, one of the latter, while she was feeding another with nuts, swung himself down by his long tail, and pulled off the crowning rose and white bow of the coalskuttle bonnet; and the bride unfortunately standing too near a boy who had offended the elephant, received a shower of water from his trunk on her muslin dress. At Madame Tussaud's, Grace was frightened into hysterics by the life-like moving of Cobbet's eyes, and in her terror knocked down that great reformer, to whom it was a novelty to be floored.

Old Hackney-Coach was often lost for hours together, and sought in vain by his anxious bride; when he would be found spell-bound

at a book-stall by some old Greek or Latin folio, the stall-keeper the while keeping his eye on him, lest he should make off with the prize. At the Crystal Palace, on a crowded Blondin day, the bride and her sister lost their beloved Hackney for the whole day, missed the last train, and only met with him when the doors were about to be closed. They roamed about in despair, vainly trying to find a vehicle of any kind to convey them to town ; not one could they see. They tried to get beds at the hotels, and even the public-houses. In vain ; either all were full, or the landlords and landladies did not like their "outlandish looks," as they called them. At length a return fly met their eager gaze, and for an exorbitant sum they were safely conveyed back to their hotel in Covent Garden.

These, and a few more small accidents, were all the misfortunes our bridal party met with

during the honeymoon. Before it came to a close, they had visited every theatre, seen every show, attended every exhibition, and, in short, fully worked out their plan of enjoyment; nay, more—Miss Grace Pryme had actually made a conquest.

Miss Grace Pryme returned to Lonecliffe herself a bride-elect. An old college chum of Hackney-Coach's, who had been thirty years a curate, and who met with his old friend and his "Womankind" by accident at Exeter Hall, envying Hackney's domestic bliss, attached himself to Miss Pryme; and, while paying his addresses to her, was, strange to say, presented to a living in the immediate neighbourhood of Lonecliffe. The whole party, at the end of the honeymoon, hastened back to the Borders, to prepare for the wedding.

## CHAPTER VI.

"Some flowers of Eden ye still inherit,  
But the trail of the serpent is over them all."

MOORE.

MRS. CROFT'S whole pride, ambition, and maternal affection, after the elopement of her two elder daughters, centred in Gloriana. Long and frequent were her consultations with Roger, on his return from Paris.

Gloriana, she said, must atone by a very brilliant match for the disgrace which her sisters had entailed on the Croft family by their degrading *mésalliance* with a dentist and a *chiropricist*. She had mastered that hard word at last, to avoid the expression "corn-cutter." Sometimes she indulged in a wild

hope that the Marquis of Dunstanburgh (for we should have said that Lord Pontecraft had become a Marquis, by his father's death), might, when rejected by Edith, turn his thoughts to Gloriana ; or if not, she resolved on securing her a foreign title, and encouraged the Count. In her rage against Mrs. Tippet and Mrs. Cutts, she was quite blind to the (for them) extenuating circumstance, that she had herself promoted the attachments which had ended in unions so odious to her, and that she was herself the great cause of her own disgrace and disappointment.

It is strange how often the most worldly and artful women act in the most imprudent and simple manner. In spite of the recent severe lesson she had received, Mrs. Croft encouraged the foreigners to accompany Edith and Gloriana in their rambles—to sing, sketch, read, ride, walk, boat, and dance with

them ; and yet she knew no more of their antecedents than she had done of those of "the Regent street gents."

Le Comte de St. Ventadour was the one among these foreign aspirants whom both mother and daughter, in the shape of Mrs. Croft and Gloriana, most affected. Not only was he the highest in rank, but he had the greatest command of money, and seemed to be looked up to by the Vicomte and the Baron as a sort of leader. The Comte de St. Ventadour was a handsome, accomplished man, of middle size, with plenty to say for himself, full of those little, half fond, half playful attentions that Englishmen so seldom pay, and that Englishwomen so delight to receive. He sang, without much voice, but with great taste, to a guitar which was slung round his breast by a broad blue ribbon, and which he played to perfection. He danced like a professor of the art, and he talked very grandly

about his honour, his ancient lineage, and his power of loving to distraction.

Roger Croft did not like the Comte de St. Ventadour, because the latter always out-talked, out-shone, out-danced, out-flirted, and, in fact, eclipsed him ; and, taking warning by the fate of his elder sisters, he suggested to his mother and to Gloriana the necessity of making some inquiries into the correctness of the Count's statements about himself, and his friends, the reality of the domain of St. Ventadour, the state of his finances, and the reputation he enjoyed in his own neighbourhood.

"The fact is," said Roger Croft, "the Marquis has been chaffing me a good deal about the Count and his intimacy here, and he thinks I ought to know everything about these foreign fellows ; and I'm resolved I will, too, or we shall have a second edition of the Tippet and Cutts romance, only a thou-

sand times worse ; for those ‘snobs’ can maintain their wives, but if these foreigners *are* adventurers, you may be sure they’re either ‘beggars or escaped galley-slaves, or some dreadful thing or other.”

“How malignant and slanderous you are, Roger!” said Gloriana, blushing and bridling; “just because the Count is more popular and more admired than you are, you cannot contain your spite and envy; and it’s just the same with the Marquis. I’m ashamed that Englishmen, who are always boasting of their generosity, should be so mean!”

“I’ll tell you what I advise, my beloved Roger,” said Mrs. Croft; “but, first, my darling Gloriana must let me tell her that she wrongs her brother, who is actuated solely by anxiety for his sister’s welfare.”

Gloriana tossed her head. Roger Croft scowled.

“I fully sympathize with both of you, my



dear children, and I can feel for Roger's anxiety about matters that may involve his sister's destiny, and the honour of the family; and I can appreciate dear Gloriana's annoyance at any doubt being expressed by the Marquis of the rank and importance of a foreign nobleman, who has distinguished her by so many proofs of admiration and respect. But you must both remember that at present the Count is only a friend—an acquaintance, in short; and, of course, can never be anything more until we are all well assured of the truth of his assertions."

"I have not a doubt of them!" said Gloriana.

"Barbara had no doubt that that snob Tippit was a gentleman; Almeria felt certain Cutts was an aristocrat. And yet Tippit was a dentist, and Cutts a corn-cutter!"

"Oh, spare me that dreadful word!" said

Mrs. Croft, "I cannot bear it! But now calm yourselves, my own and, alas! only children, for I can never look upon those ungrateful sisters of yours as daughters of mine. The Count is, as you know, very proud. You cannot say a word to him, my Roger—not a word—in which he could detect the smallest intimation of a doubt of his veracity and honour. But the Baron de Chateau Rouge is a very good-humoured, communicative fellow, and from him, I think, Roger, you might be able to obtain all the information you require."

"He is devoted heart and soul to the Count," said Gloriana, "and I think you'd better take care what you are about."

"Where is the Marquis?" asked Roger, rudely snapping his fingers, to intimate his contempt of Gloriana's suggestion.

"Oh! he and Arthur are, as usual, in close attendance on Edith. She is sketching by

the lake. and they are waiting upon her like two slaves. Arthur is reading some stupid poems aloud to her, and the Marquis is cutting her pencils and watching her every stroke."

"By Jove ! here he comes," said Roger ;  
"and the Baron with him, by all that's lucky!  
Now for it !"

"Beware !" cried Gloriana. "The Baron is a very touchy, irascible man, good-natured as he seems."

"Be very cautious, my darling Roger," said Mrs. Croft. "But you have so much tact, I am sure you will find out all you wish to know, without giving any umbrage."

"I feel certain Roger will get into a scrape," said Gloriana. "The Count and the Baron are like brothers, and any doubt of the Count's being all he represents himself to be, is an indirect insult to the Baron, who has always confirmed all St. Ventadour has said.

There they go," she added; "Roger, that meddling, mischievous Marquis, who would sacrifice his best friend to his worst joke, and the Baron. Roger with his envy, and the Marquis with his spite, are actually so taken up with their stupid pumping of the Baron, that for once they have left Edith to walk arm-in-arm with Arthur, who seems to be availing himself of the opportunity to push his fortunes with her! How earnestly he bends down to her! How she blushes! What a lovely, thorough-bred creature she is! It's no wonder the men are all in love with her! All except the Count—*my* Gonzalve—he never admires her—he sees no beauty but in my poor face. The idea of his not being the nobleman he says he is! Why, the aristocrat peeps out in every look, word, and tone. How envious Roger and the Marquis are of him!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Edith and Arthur were pacing alone the terrace on the borders of the lake. He carries her portfolio and her little flat drawing-box ; and, freed at last from the unwelcome intrusion of the Marquis, they converse, as lovers always do, of themselves, their past, their present, their future, their whole world of love. Arthur has not dared formally to propose to Edith Lorraine—Edith, daughter of Lord Hauteville, and grand-daughter of the Earl of Rockalpine. How can he, the poor, dependent, adopted—and, alas ! perhaps even illegitimate—grandson of Attorney Croft, ask the high-born Edith to share his fortunes, until he has made them great ? And she ?—no feeling of pride in those relations who had, as it were, cast her off and despised her, prevents her emboldening him—as a maiden, however modest, may—to put into words the vague allusions he ventures upon about a future to be shared with her.

Well does Edith know that to her worldly mother she is still the poor, little, carrotty cripple, destined to perpetual spinsterhood at Croft Villa. It was not that Mrs. Croft had ventured actually to deceive Lady Hauteville on this point: she constantly reiterated, as in duty bound, that Miss Edith Lorraine was become almost as strong as the generality of young ladies of her age—that there was no lameness left, no deformity apparent. Lady Hauteville looked upon all these remarks as made by Mrs. Croft to exalt herself and her own judicious and devoted nursing of the unfortunate girl. Had not the celebrated Drs. Dulcimer and Lullabel decided that, even if she lived, Edith must be a cripple?

Lady Hauteville had never seen Edith since she had consigned her to the care of Mrs. Croft; but she always thought of her as the little, pale, large-eyed, hollow-cheeked, pointed-chinned, carrotty girl she then was, and

nothing but ocular demonstration would have made her believe that she was at all altered.

Edith Lorraine was quite aware what was her mother's opinion and impression about her; and she had a wild hope that, under that impression, Lady Hauteville would not very much oppose a union between "the little carrotty cripple" and Arthur. Then, too, she knew of her grandfather's will in her favour; and she thought to herself, "Arthur will, perhaps, marry in me a portionless girl, for whom nobody, not even her own mother, cares; and then on some sad day—which may fate long avert!—he will be rich and great, for I am dear grandpapa's heiress. And, thank Heaven! none of my family have the least idea of that, and he was very anxious to keep them in ignorance of it; for he foresees that I am one day to be Arthur's wife, and he knows that such a union would

be violently opposed by my parents, unless I were supposed to be a little, carroty, portionless cripple. As it is, their pride will revolt from any connexion with the family of a solicitor; but if mamma knew that I am tall, straight, and by some pronounced handsome, and that I am grandpapa's heiress, she would separate me from the Crofts for ever, and try never to let me see Arthur more! In vain! in vain! Twice has he saved my life, and solemnly have I vowed, sooner or later, to be his, and to devote to him that life which he risked his own to save!



## CHAPTER VII.

“It is the blush that galls, and not the bruise.”

*The Lady of Lyons.*

THE Marquis and Roger Croft, as the latter said, *tackled* the Baron de Château Rouge, as they thought, with consummate tact; they cross-questioned him about the Comte de St. Ventadour.

“What a charming person the Count is!” said the Marquis.

The Baron, who spoke English pretty well for a foreigner, replied,

“He is de best friend of me.”

“What may be his age?”

"He is *dirty*, and I am *dirty*, too," said the Baron.

"Is his father dead?" asked Roger Croft.

"Yes, else he would not be master of the Château."

"Oh! he is master there?"

"Yes, I tink I hear him tell you so, and invite you dere."

"By-the-bye, where is the Count's castle?" said the Marquis.

"In Lorraine," replied the Baron.

"Oh! I thought it might be in the air," whispered Roger Croft to the Marquis.

The quick ear of the Baron caught that whisper; suddenly he stopped, turned fiercely round, collared Roger with one hand, and with the other gave him a resounding slap on the face. Before Roger could recover himself, the Baron followed it up by another slap, saying, in a voice hoarse with passion,

"A insult to my friend is a insult to me-  
self! If you are a gentleman, you require  
satisfaction, and I give it you."

"Oh, hang your satisfaction!" cried Roger,  
mad with rage ; and doubling his fists, he hit  
the Baron a blow in the chest which sent him  
to the ground.

"If you refuse my *cartel*," said the French-  
man, foaming with rage, "I post you in every  
city and town of Europe, as one poltroon, one  
dirty, lying, miserable poltroon !"

"You *must* fight him," said the Marquis,  
who had some Irish blood in his veins ; "but  
see, there are people coming. The duel can-  
not take place till to-morrow."

"Be my second, then," said Roger, who,  
though by no means brave, was still much  
excited, and was in that state in which rage  
supplies the place of valour.

"With pleasure," said the Marquis, going

up to the Baron, and asking him the name and address of his second.

The Baron named the Vicomte de la Vallée Noire, and proposed that they should meet at the hour of six the next morning.

The Marquis, saying he would settle all preliminaries with the Vicomte, bowed to the Baron, and with Roger Croft left the forest, in which they had been walking.

Roger Croft was full of deadly passions, but he was not a brave man. The Marquis, who was almost as anxious for the brilliant termination of this affair of honour as Sir Lucius O'Trigger was in a similar case, had great misgivings about Roger, who looked deadly pale, and trembled violently. The Marquis, fearing Mrs. Croft might suspect something was wrong, and guess that a duel was in contemplation, and apprise the authorities, kept close to Roger,

“ And tried to keep his spirits up,  
By pouring spirits down.”

He would not let him dine with his mother, Edith, and his sister ; but after he had seen the Vicomte, and settled all preliminaries as to place, time, and weapons, which were to be pistols, he took him a drive to a celebrated hotel, not far from the spot where the duel was to take place, and there he plied him with champagne until he actually became quite pot-valliant.

The dinner was excellent ; and a bowl of strong punch completed what the champagne had begun. Roger did not go to bed sober. He was soon in the heavy sleep of inebriety, and quite unconscious of the approaching peril.

The Marquis had written a note to Mrs. Croft, to say that Roger and himself were going to dine and sleep out, in order to judge of the merit of a certain celebrated vintage,

and that of the cook of the Hôtel du Lac. With some misgivings as to whether Roger's courage *could* be screwed up to the sticking-place in the morning, the Marquis retired to bed.

That morning came. The Marquis sprang from his bed, dressed hastily, and hurried off to Roger's room, to get him up and in the field betimes. It was some time before Roger could be aroused to the full sense of what was expected of him! He had a torturing headache, and felt very sick, gloomy, and irritable. He was a good deal exasperated at the almost hilarious excitement of the young Marquis, and, for the first time in his life, was sullen, gloomy, and almost snappish in his replies to his lordship.

The latter rather enjoyed his toady's ill-humour and evident reluctance. The Marquis was himself—as almost all our English aristocracy are—what Roger called “game to

the back-bone ;” and, in addition to the resolute, unflinching courage of the Englishman, he had inherited from his beautiful Irish mother and her ancestors a genuine delight in a fight of any kind.

“Come, man, bustle!” he said; “I wouldn’t for the world that the Frenchman should get the start of you, and be first on the field. He’s a regular scamp, no doubt; but he’s a plucky dog, and I daresay he’s a very good shot.”

“If he’s a regular scamp,” said Roger, stopping short, as, with a cold, damp, throbbing hand, he was tying his neckcloth, “I don’t think I ought to fight him.”

“Oh! but,” said the Marquis, “we’ve no proof of it; and he’s received everywhere here, and you’ve always met him on an equality, and he’s inflicted upon you an indignity which no man of honour could put up with. Why, if he’d hit me in the face with

his confounded dirty hand, I should have fought him there and then. I'm afraid I should have killed him on the spot ! I must have fought him at once !”

“ I wish to Heaven I had done so !” said Roger ; adding, *sotto voce*, as the Marquis whistled and looked out of the window, “ if I *had* fought him yesterday, it would have been all over by this time, and I shouldn't have to fight him to-day.”

In spite of the Marquis's impatience, Roger Croft made a very protracted toilet ; and even when he was obliged to own that he *was* ready, he returned to his room several times, on one pretext or another. The Marquis was rather ashamed of his man, as he walked with him to the ground. Roger's knees seemed to bend and shake, and almost to give way under him. The Marquis affected not to perceive the evidence of what he inwardly anathematised as dastardly cowardice, and



very unjustly called pettifogging poltroonery, inherited from the old snob his father. (The Marquis did old Croft great injustice ; he had ten times the moral and physical pluck of his son.)

The spot fixed upon for the duel was a level space just outside a wood. As the Marquis, arm-in-arm with Roger, almost lugged the latter along, they heard footsteps behind them, and Roger, looking round, said,

“Stop ; we’re followed ! Perhaps this matter has got wind ; this may—be some one sent—to put a stop to—it.”

“No, no, old fellow,” said the Marquis ; “we’re not in such bad luck as that, I hope ! It’s only a Mr. Hicksley, a young English surgeon, who happened to be staying at the hotel, and I thought it might be just as well to have him with us in case of need. I dare-say the Baron will bring some confounded French Sawbones ; but I’ve no opinion of any

surgical practice but our own. If I had a bullet in me, I shouldn't like to have it extracted by any but an English surgeon."

The possibility thus suggested, made Roger reel, stagger, and almost collapse. Never had he felt as he did at that moment, save once when, as a boy, he had been obliged to sit down in the dentist's arm-chair to have a huge back-tooth extracted; and the agony of fear he suffered then was a mere trifle compared with that which now iced his blood and palsied his limbs. His tongue, hot and dry, clove to the roof of his mouth; his head grew dizzy; everything swam before him.

The Marquis, luckily, had a brandy-flask in his pocket. He compelled Roger to empty it at a draught (it contained about a wine-glass and a half). After this cordial, Roger was got to the ground; and there they were almost immediately joined by the Baron, the Count, and the Vicomte.

The ground was measured ; the combatants stood opposite to each other, pistol in hand. The Marquis had whispered to Roger (who had shown symptoms of dropping his pistol, and even running away), "If you don't behave like a man to-day, I'll shoot you like a dog to-morrow !" and the moment had arrived for the signal to be given ; when suddenly a tall stranger sprang out of the wood, rushed between the combatants, and cried,

"Put up your pistols, and fly ! The police will be here in three minutes ; they have got scent of this affair. If you do not wish to be all taken before a magistrate, and perhaps incarcerated, you had better fly before a shot has been fired !"

Upon hearing this, Roger began to talk, and to imagine that he could make a little show of courage without incurring any risk.

"Oh ! come," he cried, "by Jove ! this is

too bad ! Surely there's time for an exchange of shots ?”

The Baron, livid with rage, stood opposite to Roger ; one hand clenched, the other about to raise the pistol to fire. Both himself and Roger Croft were bare-headed.

“ Fool !” said the stranger to the Baron ; “ if you fire, it must be through my body !” Then drawing near to him, he whispered : “ The game is up—the police are on our track ! I have made this duel an excuse for getting you off. There is a carriage round the corner—fly ! We shall all be guillotined if we are taken. Gentlemen,” he exclaimed aloud, “ this meeting must be postponed ; the liberty of all concerned is at stake. Hark ! hark, I hear them coming ! Fly one—fly all !”

So saying, he took the Baron by the arm, and hurried him round the corner of the wood, and into the carriage that awaited him there.

The Count and the Vicomte, lividly pale, and trembling in every limb, followed; crack went the whip, round went the wheels—away, away they go at full speed; the Marquis, Roger Croft, and the surgeon standing on the ground, where, a few minutes later, they were surrounded by the police, and a mob in attendance on that body.

The Marquis tried to account for their presence at the spot, and the pistol in Roger's hand, by saying they were practising pistol-shooting; but the police were not to be humbugged. They insisted on taking the whole party before the magistrate; there, during a minute examination, it came out that it had been discovered that four escaped galley-slaves, one of whom was an Englishman, had been for some time playing the part of fine gentlemen at Interlachen; that they were all gamblers, who had been sent to the galleys for cheating, and for conspiring to murder a

young nobleman whom they had fleeced, and who had threatened to expose them. Their plan was, to murder him, and make it appear that he had committed suicide. These wretches, then, were the *soi-disant* Count, Vicomte, and Baron ; and the Englishman—a dressy man, of gentlemanly address, who called himself Captain Rutland Danvers—was the fourth miscreant concerned in this base plot, and was a notorious blackleg, who had been obliged to leave his own country from dread of the vengeance of a man whom he had cheated.

The Marquis, Roger, and Mr. Hicksley were dismissed with a caution, after having been kept the whole bright summer day shut up in a small close office, reeking of onions and tobacco. This day Edith and Arthur had spent by the lake and in the forest. A white day it was in Love's calendar.

When the truth was known to Mrs. Croft and Gloriana, the latter was in despair ; for

the *soi-disant* Count, who had been bred to the stage, had completely captivated her fancy and won her affections. Tippit and Cutts became quite desirable acquaintance in comparison with these three desperate villains and escaped convicts.

Roger Croft, who had actually stood face to face with the Baron, pistol in hand, boasted largely of his prowess, save when the Marquis was present ; and Mrs. Croft was so ashamed of her own weakness and imprudence in admitting those foreign impostors to her house, and allowing them to associate with her daughters, that she resolved on at once leaving the scene of her folly and disgrace ; and the Croft party set out on their travels again the next week.

## CHAPTER VIII.

“What is Love? If earthly only,  
Like a meteor of the night,  
Shining but to leave more lonely  
Hearts that hailed its transient light.  
But when calm, refined, and tender,  
Purified from passion's stain,  
Like the moon in gentle splendour  
Ruling o'er the peaceful main.”

BERNARD BARTON.

MRS. CROFT resolved to complete her continental tour by a winter and spring in Paris. She had wrung from Mr. Croft a reluctant consent to this arrangement, on condition that she would contentedly settle down at Croft Villa on her return to England, and (as he always said in winding up every letter



which he sent to her) "devote herself to her duties, her husband, and her home."

Mrs. Croft was not a woman of very high principles; she did not much care what she entailed on the Future, as long as she was empowered fully to enjoy the Present in her own way. The having her own way was the study and delight of her life; and she generally contrived to effect it, either "by insinuation or bluster," as Peggy Lobkin has it.

After the Croft party had left Interlachen, they visited Germany, its cities and its spas, spent the latter part of the autumn and the early portion of the winter in Italy, and finally took up their abode in the Place Vendôme, Paris. Here Mrs. Croft had secured elegant apartments; and here, with introductions to the best society, sent, on his granddaughter's account, by the old Earl of Rock-alpine, and a cheque for a considerable amount, coaxed out of old Croft, with an in-

creased stipend from Lord Hauteville for Edith's board and maintenance, Mrs. Croft prepared fully to enjoy all the varied pleasures and amusements of "the City of Delights."

Mrs. Croft, although at heart rather a mean, artful, unprincipled person, was not of vulgar exterior or manners. She was tall, thin, pale, and quiet; and, being always fashionably dressed, passed muster very well, especially when accompanied by too young creatures so blooming and attractive as were the Psyche-like Edith, with her rich auburn hair, fair skin, and large dark eyes, and the brilliant brunette, pretty little Gloriana.

Arthur had not been over since the long vacation; and the Marquis, Roger Croft, and the whole of the fast set, were very busy preparing for their examinations. Two or three of them had been plucked, one had been rusticated, and one expelled; and these disasters had startled the rest out of their sensual frivo-

lities, their idleness, vanity, and dissipation, and roused them to the necessity of study, self-denial, and some degree of steadiness.

Arthur alone, who had always had courage to resist temptation, to defy evil influence, and to despise the ridicule of the worthless and the idle—Arthur was fast approaching the goal of his ambition. While Roger Croft and the remnant of the fast set were studying night and day to endeavour to secure a bare degree, Arthur, who had always aimed at high honours, was spoken of in Oxford as sure of his “First.” A First Class! That, to the self-made man, was the first step to a home, with Edith as his wife. His grandfather, old Croft, had said, if Arthur took the highest honours, he would enter him at the Bar, promote, in every way in his power, his success in that noble profession, place him as a pupil with a first-rate counsellor, and, once called, use all his influence to get him briefs.

As a solicitor, he could do a great deal himself in that way, and influence many London attorneys to push the young barrister. In that noble and progressive career, Arthur might, with his talent, zeal, industry, and self-denial, rise to a great height, to which even Lady Hauteville *must* look up. And at that thought Arthur's heart beat high, for Edith was the prize for which he was contending.

Edith, on her side, had cultivated her own mind, and had read, and reflected, and studied, with a view of making herself a help-mate worthy of a man of Arthur's intellect and knowledge. No vain, ridiculous thought of rivalry urged her on; she knew that the knowledge which is valuable in a man, would be pedantic in a woman. She did not affect to study classics, mathematics, philosophy, science; but she tried hard to master French, Italian, and German; she endea-

voured to become acquainted with the best writers in her own language ; she wished that Arthur might never have to blush for her ignorance of history, geography, biography, poetry.

Edith was the object of Arthur's deep, earnest, untiring study, in his little college room. For her he consumed the midnight lamp ; for her he sacrificed his favourite exercise—boating on the blue river ; for her he gave up the rosy morning, the sunny day, the dewy eve, the sweet moonlight, to hard reading, stern, unflinching, earnest study. Her portrait smiled on him as he read, a tress of her auburn hair warmed his heart, a “sachet,” given by her, perfumed his desk—everything spoke of, breathed of Edith.

And he was well repaid. It was for Arthur that Edith rose betimes, and gave such energetic attention to the study of modern languages, that her masters marvelled

at a progress of which they never guessed the secret, and quoted her to their other pupils as a model for their imitation. It was for Arthur that she read so constantly, and tried so to remember what she read. It was for Arthur that she threw her whole soul into her drawing, her music, even her needlework ; for him (and in the hope of fitting herself one day to keep his house, and to spare him trouble) she perfected herself in arithmetic, and studied book-keeping. Everything had reference to the acquirement of that excellence which alone (as she thought, in the sweet humility of her true love) could render her worthy to be the companion of his life, the mistress of his home, the wife of his bosom.

In proportion to Edith's indifference to the admiration of any and every man but Arthur, was the interest and enthusiasm she excited wherever she appeared. She had not yet

been formally introduced, but Mrs. Croft took upon herself to leave a card of Edith's at the Embassy, with her own and Gloriana's. The result of this was an invitation to a ball. To Edith, this or any other ball would have been a matter of little interest; but to this particular ball Edith looked forward with a flutter of wild ecstasy, for Arthur was to be in Paris for his Christmas holidays. Arthur would leave his card at the Embassy; he would be invited to this ball; he would be her principal partner!

The dress she should wear on the occasion became an object of intense interest now. It would be so delightful to please Arthur's refined taste, to surpass his expectations, to be the fairest of the fair in his eyes; and, what in Paris is far more important, to be the best dressed. There the toilet is the great object of woman's life. The Empress's milliner and dressmaker, the great Madame Roget, was

consulted. With the enthusiasm of genius, she threw her whole heart and soul into Edith's ball dress. She did her best for Mrs. Croft and Gloriana, but for Edith she was inspired!

Arthur had arrived, had left his card at the embassy, had been invited. The Marquis, too, would be at the English ambassador's ball. The knowledge of this fact only made Edith engage herself for the first quadrille to Arthur, and arrange to dance as many times as possible with him, including the supper dance, without being too exclusive, and provoking ill-natured comments by their arrangements.

The dresses came home in good time. We are not going to attempt to describe them; suffice it to say that in Edith's Madame Roget had surpassed herself. Nothing in such exquisite taste, so fairy-like, so ærial, so becoming, so costly, so light, so chaste, and



yet so rich, had ever been seen even in Paris. The perfection of Edith's rounded and yet sylph-like form was defined by a *corsage* fitting to perfection, and the graceful lines of her perfect figure were revealed, in spite of the delicate profusion of gossamer drapery and soft lace. Edith's dress was white, relieved by blush-roses that seemed just plucked from the tree, and which were spangled with dew. A lovely wreath of the same crowned her brow, contrasting beautifully with the rich and glossy auburn of her abundant tresses. Gloriana, the sparkling brunette, was in amber crape, trimmed with yellow roses and pearls, and Mrs. Croft in black velvet and diamonds.

Great was the excitement caused among the demonstrative French, both gentlemen and ladies, when the Croft party entered the *salons* of the embassy. The Marquis was in close attendance on Edith; although, being

engaged to dance the first dance with Arthur, she leant on his arm.

Arthur at this time was twenty, tall, well-grown, very aristocratic and gentlemanly in appearance, with a face of great intelligence, and a smile of ineffable sweetness. His massive brow denoted genius; his large, deep-set, dark eyes were full of thought. He was very pale, as all deep-feeling and deep-thinking men are; and, all self-made nobody as he was supposed to be, and as he believed himself to be, there was not a man in the room who looked more completely the *beau ideal* of a young English nobleman. And was this the adopted, dependent, and perhaps illegitimate grandson of old Croft, the solicitor? Arthur was dressed in quiet but good taste. The Marquis, who was rather fond of finery and show (most fast men are), had rather overdone it on this occasion.

Edith, who, during her abode on the Con-

tenant, had perfected herself in the art of which she had acquired the rudiments from an Alnwick dancing-master, glided through the mazes of the crowded dance with an ease and grace that delighted even the Parisian connoisseurs, who crowded round the quadrille to see *la belle Anglaise*. Gloriana got plenty of partners, and was very much admired, but Edith was the recognised queen and undisputed belle of that splendid ball. The Marquis was more in love with her than ever. Most men find their admiration increase in proportion as the object of it is followed and worshipped by others. He could not often obtain Edith's hand, but he could hover near, and carry her shawl, her fan, her bouquet, her smelling-bottle. He could watch her every movement, and parade his admiration, his idolatry. Not so Arthur. His object was to conceal as much as possible the deep, deep love of his heart. To him Edith was as

lovely and as dear in her simple white muslin or pink gingham as in all the aërial brilliancy of her ball dress. He felt dejected, disheartened, and depressed.

Edith, in her pearls, her gossamer, her laces, her blush-roses, and gazed or glanced at with half-tender adoration by the *élite* of Paris, seemed much further removed above the reach of his love than Edith in her morning dress and brown straw hat, roaming through the forest glades, sitting by the lake, and climbing the wild mountains. Poor Arthur ! he could almost have wept at the thoughts that thronged his mind. At one moment he said to himself, " This brilliant, high-born beauty can never be my wife ; the queen of such a scene as this can never love a nobody like me ! I have deceived myself—she has deceived herself. I see now the wide distance between us." And when a timid glance of eloquent and unmistakeable love stole sud-

denly from under Edith's long auburn lashes, and, with a smile of tenderness unutterable, she tried furtively to dispel his gloom, his thoughts, not less torturing, took this form :—  
“ Even if she would resign all for my sake, ought I to accept—ought I to permit such a sacrifice ? Does she, in her sweet ignorance of the world, her sublime humility and self-abnegation—does she understand the full extent of the sacrifices she must make in order to be true to me ? Ought I to allow her to unite her fortunes to one worse than lowly born—one who may fail, and whose success cannot, in long years of toil, ensure her the position any one of these titled admirers that are now courting her notice, could offer her at once ? I feel as if I ought to sacrifice my very being to her welfare. But would it be for her welfare ? To such a nature as hers, what can be so valuable as so great a love as

mine? I feel a sad presentiment of some coming evil settling like a nightmare on my heart, and the dark shadows of some coming events clouding the sunshine of my soul."

With a slow step and a mournful smile Arthur at this moment approached Edith. A dance for which she was engaged to him, was about to commence. He made his way to the spot where Edith sat with Mrs. Croft and Gloriana, surrounded by admirers, who had been introduced to her, and were imploring the honour of this polka or that waltz. The Marquis was close by, waiting upon Edith, an ice in his hand, which, with great difficulty, he had obtained from the refreshment-room, and had almost persuaded Edith to take, when Arthur's arrival to claim her hand decided her upon refusing it. What a tyrant this Love is! The Marquis was a

proud man, but once under Cupid's sway he was a slave ; and Edith, enchanted to be rid of him, and all those (to her) wearisome admirers, blushed with delight at Arthur's approach, rose with alacrity, and placed her frank young hand in his, with a tender animation and confiding affection at which the Marquis grew pale and gloomy, and all the others red and angry.

Edith tried all she could, by a thousand little wiles and devices which Love soon imparts to womankind, to win Arthur from the dejection and anxiety which she read on his eloquent face. He smiled in answer to her gentle raillery, but it was

“ ——— a smile

Gleaming like moonlight o'er some lonely isle,  
Lighting its ruins ; and it seem'd to say  
That 'neath that smile the heart's cold ruins lay.”

By this time the *salons* were full. The grandees of all nations, who generally arrive

very late and depart very early, were now exchanging graceful bows and curtsies, compliments and small talk.



## CHAPTER IX.

“Oh, these are partings such as rend  
 The life from out young hearts ; for who can guess  
 If ever more shall meet those mutual eyes,  
 Since upon dawn so sweet, such awful morn can rise?”

BYRON.

“HAS your ladyship seen the new English belle?” said a foreign Duke, in French, to a lady, *passée, blonde*, and with some remains of beauty, who, with a handsome, beautifully dressed daughter on her arm, and a diplomatic, pale, stern-looking husband by her side, had just arrived at the ball.

“No ; I have seen nothing very beautiful, or very new,” languidly replied the lady.

“What is her name?”

“Ah ! that I cannot tell you,” said the

Duke ; “ but if your ladyship will accept my arm, I can lead you to the quadrille where she is dancing ; and I think you will own that a more lovely creature never came even from the Isle of Beauty.”

“ And is this miracle of loveliness well-dressed ?”

“ Exquisitely ! Nothing in the room approaches her in this respect, your ladyship and your fair daughter of course excepted.”

“ And how does she dance ?”

“ Admirably !—with an ease, a grace, and a lightness quite inexpressible.”

Her ladyship’s curiosity was excited. She had hoped and expected that her own daughter would have been the belle of that ball ; and as she was a remarkably handsome girl, a very fine dancer, and tastefully set off, perhaps, had Edith not been present, she might have carried off the palm for beauty and grace.

The crowd, which had closed round the

quadrille to see Edith, made way for the Duke (himself an ambassador), and for the lady on his arm, and the young belle on hers; the stern, diplomatic husband was close beside them. Edith at that moment was gracefully advancing alone in *l'Eté* to meet Arthur. A soft blush mantled her fair cheek as she raised to his, eyes full of the light of love.

"She is indeed a beautiful person!" said the lady. "For once, Duke, my expectations are surpassed. Who is that elegant young man with whom she is dancing? and, above all, who is the lovely creature herself? I have a fancy I have seen that sweet face before, but I cannot remember where."

"I will go and inquire of our noble hostess," said the Duke.

Presently he returned.

"The name of *la belle Anglaise*," he said, "is Miss Edith Lorraine; and she is here with a Mrs. Croft, and that lady's son and daughter.

The son is that young man whom your ladyship admired just now ; the daughter is that pretty, sprightly little brunette in amber crape, with the wreath of yellow roses in her black hair. See ! she is now *balancing* to her partner, the young Marquis of Dunstanburgh. But what ails your ladyship ? Are you not well ?”

The Duke might well ask that question, for Lady Hauteville (the reader has probably suspected that it was she), yes, Lady Hauteville, Edith’s mother, has seen her child for the first time for many a long year ! The little, wan, moon-eyed, carrotty cripple, whom she so heartlessly sent from her, now dances gracefully before her, in face and form the loveliest creature she had ever beheld.

The Duke has been called away to escort his Duchess to her carriage ; convulsively Lady Hauteville clutches the arm of her pale, stern husband.

---

“Hauteville,” she whispers, “do you see that beautiful girl in white, with the blush-roses?”

“Yes.”

He was laconic, but even he had been struck by Edith’s charms.

“She is Edith—our Edith! The little carrotty cripple has grown into that most beautiful of girls.”

“Indeed! Then it’s high time we had her home.”

“I think so, too. Oh, that wily, designing woman!—that base Mrs. Croft!—how she has deceived me!”

“Nay, I remember she said Edith was strong and well. I think you have deceived yourself.”

“That snob who is dancing with Edith is old Croft’s grandson.”

“Tush! I was thinking what an elegant young man he was. There is something about

him that recalls—Ah ! no matter—I am certain he is no snob.”

“ Old Croft’s grandson *must* be a snob,” said Lady Hauteville.

\* \* \* \* \*

The dance was over. Lady Hauteville, leaning on the arm of the Duke, who had rejoined her, suddenly met with Mrs. Croft, in the centre of a brilliant crowd of Parisian beaux and belles. The innate and cringing toadyism of Mrs. Croft’s nature was seen in the abject humility of her obeisance. Lady Hauteville treated with cold hauteur the woman to whom she had entrusted her daughter. She never offered to shake hands with her, but requesting Mrs. Croft to follow her, led the way to an ante-room, and insolently announced her intention of resuming the guardianship of her daughter, and taking her back to England with her in a few days. Edith was then sent for ; Lady Hauteville pressed her to

her side, if not her heart, and Ida coldly embraced her long-absent sister. Edith could hardly repress her tears when she heard she was at once to take leave of the Crofts, and to accompany her mother to the Hôtel du Louvre. It pained the affectionate girl to the heart to hear Lady Hauteville so haughtily and coldly desiring Mrs. Croft to send all Miss Edith Lorraine's things to the hotel.

"We will now return to the ball-room," said Lady Hauteville; "for your sister Ida is engaged for the supper dance."

"So am I, mamma," said Edith; and before her mother could question her or interpose, she took the arm which Arthur, who was looking out for her, offered, and was shut in with him, by the brilliant crowd which shut her out from her mother.

Well were Arthur's dark presentiments realized now. Poor Arthur! he had not the least idea of what had happened. He did not

know—he had not even guessed—who the cold, fashionable, scornful lady was, who had watched Edith and himself so narrowly during the last quadrille. Alas! his worst anticipations are more than equalled. They are to part—to part at once—that very night, never to meet on an equality again! He is so agitated, he can scarcely control his emotion; and her tears will drop amid the flowers of her bouquet.

The dance over, while every other pair hastens to the supper-room, Arthur leads Edith into a deserted alcove full of flowers; and there the pale and hapless lovers exchange vows of eternal constancy and deathless love; and one parting kiss seals those vows. They were slowly leaving that alcove, when the Marquis of Dunstanburgh appeared.

“I am sent by Lady Hauteville to conduct you to her side at the supper-table,” he said.



“My partner is escorting me thither,” said Edith, proudly, clinging to Arthur’s arm.

Both felt that it was the last time, for a long, dreary, indefinite period, that she would lean on that manly arm, and look up into that dear face, or he press that little taper hand to his side, and gaze into her glorious eyes.

Oh! what pangs were in reserve for Edith, when her mother, who had kept a place for her and for the Marquis at the supper-table, with a haughty bow dismissed Arthur. The evening, begun in Love and Hope, ended in Darkness and Despair!

Edith, in spite of her mother’s sneering surprise and anger, sought out Mrs. Croft, to take an affectionate leave of her and Gloriana; and holding out her hand to Arthur, with a courage for which we honour her, asked him to put on her opera-cloak, and to hand her to the carriage. This was all she could do to show her preference, her constancy, her re-

solve ; and the thought of this, comforted Arthur during many a long, sleepless night.

The Dawn of Love was overcast ! Lady Hauteville left Paris suddenly—no one knew why ; and Edith and Arthur were parted.

The secret of Lady Hauteville's sudden departure was not known in Paris for some time, but we have no wish to keep our dear reader in the dark, and, therefore, we will at once own that it was caused by a letter from a friend in the North, which announced that the Earl of Rockalpine had had an attack of a kind very closely resembling a fit.

Lady Hauteville did not communicate to Edith the tidings she had received, else she would have discovered a fact of which she had no idea ; namely, that Edith was deeply and affectionately attached to her grandfather. But no details of her child's outer or inner life, during her abode with the Crofts, were known to Lady Hauteville.

There had been a time, much as her Ladyship affected to despise Mrs. Croft, when, as girls, they had been almost on an equality ; but that was before Sir James Armstrong became a great man and a millionaire. Lady Hauteville pretended a total forgetfulness and an entire oblivion of those early days, of which, when first she met with Mrs. Croft at Rockalpine, the latter had been so proud. When first Mrs. Croft tried to recall to her ladyship's mind that they had attended the same dancing-school, and had met at the same friends' houses at Christmas, in Newcastle, Lady Hauteville cut her short by coldly saying,

“I do not remember the circumstances to which you allude, Mrs. Croft. As far as my recollection goes, I was never permitted to visit any people who lived *in* Newcastle. Both Sir James and Lady Armstrong were so very particular with whom I associated.”

Mrs. Croft had perception enough to deduce from this remark that Lady Hauteville was ashamed of her early days and their associations, and she had tact enough to avoid, in future, all reference to that Past, upon which she had hoped to build an intimacy and a friendship with Lady Hauteville.

When Lady Hauteville coldly announced to her daughters, Ida and Edith, that they must prepare at once to accompany her to England, the effect on the two girls was as different as their tempers and characters. Ida, quite thorough-bred in her coldness and impassibility, made no remark, no objection; one place was to her much the same as another, and so long as she was surrounded by the same luxuries, the same amusements, it mattered not to her whether she was in London or Paris. Self, self, self!—like so many of the daughters of Fashion, Vanity, and Ambition, she had no other idol, object, or consi-

deration ; if she cared for anybody but herself, it was for her brother Brian.

Edith, on the contrary, cared little for herself. She was as warm and enthusiastic as Ida was cold and indifferent.

"Oh, mamma!" she exclaimed, "if we are really going so soon, I hope you will let me drive at once to Mrs. Croft's, to take leave of her, of Gloriana, and——"

"And of that forward snob, old Croft's grandson," sneered Lady Hauteville. "No ; I thank you, my love. My great wish is that you should, as quickly as you conveniently can, forget the existence of those plebeians."

"Forget them !" cried Edith, the tears rushing to her eyes, and burning crimson suffusing her face. "Forget those who nursed, loved, cherished, and comforted me when I was the despised little carrotty cripple, whose pale sharp face and halting gait disgusted and

estranged even her own mother? Forget the constant kindness of years? Forget Mrs. Croft?—forget Gloriana? Oh, mamma!”

“ Well, if you cannot forget those exquisite specimens of *bon ton*, good breeding, and fashion, at any rate, I hope you will forget that ugly, pallid, low-bred young man, old Croft’s grandson. I really don’t know his name—I doubt if he have one. I remember hearing something to that effect, which, as I have so supreme a contempt for the whole Croft family, has quite escaped my memory; but I do remember all sorts of unpleasant stories about that young man’s mother, old Croft’s daughter—a vain, silly, low-born beauty, whom the late Lady Rockalpine foolishly educated and introduced as a lady. I believe she went wrong, and that in reality the young upstart has no name! But whether he have or not, pray banish him from your memory, Edith, even if the lovely Mrs. Croft

is to be for ever enshrined there ! Vulgar women are bad enough ; but a snobbish young man—oh ! the idea of such a creature quite overpowers me ! My Ida, hand me your vinaigrette. When I think of that young upstart, I fancy I smell cigars, and onions and garlic, and cheese and red herrings and beer, and all the horrible things such creatures delight in !”

“ Arthur is no snob, mamma !” passionately exclaimed Edith, with a flood of tears. “ Arthur never smokes, never drinks, never touches onions or garlic, or cheese or red herrings ; he is the soul of refinement—the quintessence of intellect—the pride and glory of his college and his tutors. Twice has he saved my life at the imminent peril of his own ! He is the noblest, bravest, most gifted, and best of men—the most refined and well-bred of gentlemen ; whatever his parentage may be, Arthur is one of Nature’s noblemen ! And he is so

virtuous, so good, and speaks so tenderly of his mother, that I, for one, can never believe that she was aught but the angel of goodness and purity he believes her to have been. Do not be angry, mamma, when I say that I never, never can forget what he is, and what I owe him !”

“You will find you both must and can forget all about such a person !” said Lady Hauteville, as, reclining in an easy-chair, she gazed at Edith’s agitated features and manner with a cool mockery which Ida’s handsome young face reflected in a softer sneer.

“My Ida,” continued Lady Hauteville, “Edith shall take a part in Lady Bessborough’s private theatricals. I’m sure she’ll make a great hit in high tragedy.”

“I daresay she will,” coolly replied fair Ida, “only I don’t think Lady Laura will resign in her favour.”

“Then we’ll have a performance at our own



house," said Lady Hauteville; "I'm resolved Edith shall play *Belvidera* and *Mrs. Haller*."

"You will not really refuse to let me wish Mrs. Croft and her family good-bye, mamma?" sobbed Edith.

"Indeed I must do so, my love," said Lady Hauteville. "Mrs. Croft is a very vulgar person; she is, besides, a very artful and double-dealing one! She has acted very unfairly to me in keeping me in ignorance of your recovery, the entire disappearance of any defect in your figure or your walk, and the singular change that has taken place in the colour of your hair and complexion. Yes! she has behaved most treacherously by you and by me, in thus dooming you to so long and so close an intimacy with her odious self, and her more odious family. I never can, and never will, forgive her, and I forbid you, Edith, on pain of my serious displeasure, ever to mention the name of Croft in my pre-

sence ! I am a most unhappy, disappointed mother. Georgina—as you, my Ida, well know, if Edith does not—eloped with a *soi disant* Count, whom I verily believe to be nothing better than an Italian bandit—a wretch with whom she could not live, and who, I believe, tried to murder her ; Augusta, Lady Richlands, harbours her and defies me. You, Ida, will enter on your fourth season, unmarried ; and now you, Edith, who might atone to me in some measure, and comfort my half-broken heart and disappointed maternal ambition (for the young Marquis of Dunstanburgh evidently admires you beyond measure)—you actually return to me, after the sacrifice I made in parting with you—you return to me, I say, all I could wish, I own, in grace and beauty, but full of the most abject attachment to the plebeian family in which I so unfortunately placed you. Actually making your eyes red because

I refuse to let you keep up an intimacy which any woman of fashion ought to blush to own. But, gentle as I am, I am very resolute, and when I say *no*, I mean it; therefore, while Lisette packs up your things, you, my Ida, and you, Edith, shall accompany me to Madame Roget's, to Palmyre's, and to Laure's. We must all give extensive orders for next season; and if those great *artistes* see you, Edith, and study your face, hair, complexion, and figure, they will know, when you are out of mourning, what among the new fashions of next spring will suit you."

"Out of mourning, mamma!" said Edith, who was still weeping, "why should we go into mourning?"

"Did I say mourning?" cried Lady Hauteville, remembering herself. "What could I have been thinking of?"

"I hope there's no chance of my having to go into mourning," said Ida, with more ani-

mation than she had hitherto shown. "I hate black, it does not become me."

"Bathe your eyes and change your dress, Edith, for the carriage is waiting ; and now, while I go and alter my attire, do you put on your bonnets and mantles. Let down your veil, Edith," said Lady Hauteville ; "luckily, I perceive, you take after me, and *can* weep without your eyes and nose getting red. That is what no plebeian can do. It is a peculiarity that belongs exclusively to the thorough-bred and high-born."

Did Lady Hauteville try to deceive herself as well as her daughters ? Can she have forgotten that one of her grandfathers had been a pitman, and the other a carpenter, and that both her grandmothers had been maids-of-all-work in their youth ?

Before Edith set out with her parents and her sister for England *via* Calais, she snatched a few minutes to write a few lines of affectionate

farewell to Mrs. Croft, and Gloriana, and a note to him whom she, in spite of her mother's contempt, recognised as the affianced lover of her youth, and her destined husband. She poured out her young heart to Arthur in the following words :—

“ Arthur ! dear Arthur ! my first and only love ! we are doomed to part ; and I know not when or where we shall meet again ! He who made our hearts and filled them so full of love, and bound them so closely together, will, doubtless, in His own good time, my Arthur, remove all barriers to our union ! In the meanwhile, dear love, let no doubts of your Edith's truth, and faith, and constancy, disturb your mind ; be sure while she lives she lives for you alone. The life you twice saved she will yet devote to you—at morning and evening, and at noonday, she will pray for her union with you. If you, her dearest one, invoke heaven at the same time, the

thoughts of both will meet in boundless space, and arrive together at the throne of Grace !

“ My own true love ! I send you the ring-let you asked for so long ago. I have your dear lock of hair, my Arthur, in a locket hidden in my breast ! Oh ! Arthur ! used as I am to your bright converse, and your deep, true love, with all its thousand delicate fore-thought and enchanting tenderness, how cold, how lone, how desolate I shall feel without you ! Thank you, dearest and best, for all the happiness I have known through you. In haste and secrecy I write, but the day will come, *shall* come, when all the world shall know how dear, how very dear is Arthur to the heart of his

“ EDITH.”

This note Edith contrived to send with that which she had written to Mrs. Croft by

a porter of the hotel. Both letters arrived at the Place Vendôme just as Roger Croft, who had been detained in England, sore against his will, drove up to Mrs. Croft's lodgings.

His rage, disappointment, and despair knew no bounds when he found that Edith had been removed from his mother's care. In spite of Mrs. Croft's description of the insolence, coldness, and hauteur of Lady Hauteville's behaviour to her at the Ambassador's ball, Roger Croft, as soon as he had taken a warm bath, and donned a *recherché* morning costume, resolved to hasten to the Hôtel du Louvre to see Edith, and endeavour to make a favourable impression on Lady Hauteville.

Ludicrously overdressed, glittering with jewellery, scented, glossy, and the quintessence of execrable taste, Roger Croft called at the Hôtel du Louvre just as the young Marquis was handing Ida Hauteville into a carriage laden with luggage, which was to convey the

Hauteville party to the station. Edith was about to accept the Marquis's hand to enter the carriage, in her turn, when Roger Croft came up.

“How do you do, Lady Hauteville; I hope I see your ladyship in good health?” said the vulgar, pushing Roger. “How do you do, Lord Hauteville, and you, Edith, how are you—how do?” and he familiarly offered to shake hands with Edith.

Edith, her heart full of Arthur, of the happy Past and its old associations, never dreamt of refusing her hand; and Lord Hauteville, who, for some secret reasons of his own, always affected great civility to every member of the Croft family, kindly asked after Roger's parents; but Lady Hauteville, scarcely deigning to recognise the showy intruder, ordered Edith to remove at once to the other side of the carriage, and angrily saying, “Hauteville, we shall miss the train,” whispered to her



footman to tell the coachman to drive on. She then took a cordial leave of the young Marquis, to whom she said, "*Au revoir*, at Rockalpine, my dear lord, the sooner the better;" and, with a very cold, distant bend, she dismissed Roger, who, reddening to the roots of his closely-cropped hair, raised his hat, and the Hauteville party drove off without his even seeing that Edith, in spite of Lady Hauteville, bowed her head and waved her hand to him.

As they drove along, a sudden stoppage occurred, owing to an accident in the road (an over-driven omnibus horse had fallen in the street), and a halt was the inevitable result. Before they were again in motion, a young man, in a deep reverie, drew near. At his approach Edith's colour rose to her very temples; the word "Arthur!" burst from her lips, from her heart, almost unconsciously to herself, and as unconsciously she extended

her hand. Arthur stopped, raised his eyes—those large dark orbs, so full of genius and love; a blush of surprise and pleasure mantled his pale cheek; and with graceful cordiality he took Edith's extended hand.

Lady Hauteville surveyed him with a cold and disdainful scrutiny, which quite escaped him, for he saw nothing but his idolised Edith. Lord Hauteville, on the contrary, started at the sudden apparition of that noble face, that tall, slender form, as if a ghost had stood before him. A spasm contracted his brow, a deadly pallor stole over his face, a sharp pang was at his heart. He leant back in the carriage and closed his eyes, and his mind travelled in a moment back over a dreary space of twenty-four years—a ghost-haunted space!

Arthur's face and smile and form recalled (with the distinctness of yesterday) that brother who, in one fatal moment, in the Black Wood so far away, had passed from a

being, radiant and noble as the youth now before him, to a bleeding corpse; and who, for twenty-four years, had been an inmate of the family vault at Rockalpine—sent thither, *by whom?*

Lord Hauteville seemed, as Arthur drew near and spoke to Edith, to see that brother once more in the flesh, before him; and the whole dreadful Past rushed back upon his heart and brain, and a deadly faintness came over him. When he recovered, the carriage was again in motion, Arthur was gone, and Lady Hauteville was scolding the pale and weeping Edith for condescending to shake hands with a member of the low Croft family.

## CHAPTER X.

“Invidious grave! how dost thou rend in sunder  
Whom love has knit, and sympathy made one!”

BLAIR.

ON the arrival of the Hautevilles in London, the sad truth was revealed to Edith, for a telegram had just reached Hauteville House announcing that the Earl of Rockalpine was *in extremis*. This telegram was sent by Mr. Croft, and it announced, not only that the Earl was dying, but that he was very anxious to see his dear Edith before he expired.

“Oh, there must be some mistake there,” said Lady Hauteville; “that is some blunder of that stupid old Croft’s. What can the Earl want to see Edith for?”

“Oh, he loves me so dearly, and I am so very, very fond of him!” sobbed Edith. “He always said he should send for me when he was dying, and I always promised to be with him.”

“Dear me! it’s all very extraordinary, as, indeed, everything is connected with you, Edith. I shall consult your father about taking you to Rockalpine. Death-bed scenes are not at all desirable for young girls, particularly such a nervous, hysterical, eccentric one as you are.”

“Oh, mamma, I *must* go! I cannot stay away from dear, dear grandpapa, when he has sent for me to close his eyes!” said Edith. “Do take me with you!” and she fell on her knees in her grief and despair; but Lady Hauteville only said, “Let go my robe, you will tumble and soil it. I see no necessity for your going, and I do not think I shall allow it!”

Edith let go her hold of her mother's dress; and, still kneeling, buried her face in her hands, sobbing bitterly.

At this moment Lord Hauteville came in. In spite of the one dread crime which had poisoned his life, he was not half so heartless and so cruel as his wife. He listened to what Lady Hauteville said, and to Edith's words, broken as they were by sobs; and then raising her, he said, "You *shall* go with us, Edith. We must set off at once; the carriage is at the door; the express starts in an hour from Euston-square—we shall only be just in time."

They travelled all night, and at six in the morning they reached Rockalpine. Edith spent the long, dreary, weary hours in tears and prayers. Lady Hauteville's shallow head and hard heart were full of exultation at the thought that at length she should be a Countess, that the ancient coronet of Rockalpine would grace her brow, that she should wear it

in the House of Lords, and take precedence of Lady this and that—and, above all, of her own daughter, Lady Richlands (as the Earldom of Rockalpine was an older one than that of Richlands). She would fain have talked on the subjects next her heart, but Edith could not, and Lord Hauteville would not, listen to her frivolous vanities, in the solemn presence of approaching Death.

Lord Hauteville's mind was full of anguish, and his breast of a vague dread, an ever-haunting horror. The thought of him, the brother who, but for his crime, ought to have inherited the title and estates about to be his own, rose on his mind as he looked from the window of the railway carriage into the gloomy distance; that brother's eyes seemed to him to gaze at him from the clouds—that brother's voice to whisper in the wind! Then came the thought of his father's funeral, and of the opening of that dread vault, closed for four-and-twenty

years, and which he must bear to see re-opened! In fancy he sees his brother's coffin! Oh, what groans escape, as from his very heart! and how Lady Hauteville sneers as they catch her ear, inwardly exclaiming, "Is he a fool or a hypocrite? It is impossible he can really mourn for the old man, who has kept him for twenty years out of his title and estates, and who, by all the laws of Nature, ought to have been dead and buried long ago!"

\* \* \* \* \*

The Earl still breathed when Lord Hauteville and Edith approached his bed-side. Edith, overcome with grief, sank on her knees beside the bed, took the lean, withered, old hand in hers, and covered it with her kisses and her tears. "Like a languishing lamp that just flashes to die," the Earl's eyes brightened for a moment, a smile stole over his face; he opened his arms, Edith threw herself into them.



“Good-bye—a long good-bye, my blessed little one,” said the old man. “I am going, my lamb, and, thanks to you, I go to the Good Shepherd. Here is my Bible. *You* taught the old world-stained miser to love his Bible, see if I have not studied it well. You will find a list of my pensioners ; let them not miss me, my child. *You* first taught me to care for others. All I have is yours.”

Here Lord Hauteville started, came forward, and said,

“How are you, father?”

He could think of nothing else to say.

“Good-bye, Hauteville, I wish you well,” said the Earl ; and then, kissing Edith tenderly, he said, “Pray for me, little one, for my time is come.”

Edith slid from his embrace to the floor, still holding the dear old hand. Suddenly she felt it relax and grow cold in her own. The word “Jesus” fell on her ear; she looked

timidly up—it was all over—the Earl of Rock-alpine was no more !

\* \* \* \* \*

In the dead of the ensuing night, while the nurses were supposed to watch beside the corpse, which had been placed in a shell, and lay on a table in the dressing-room—and while the women, overcome by whiskey and fatigue, slept—three men, who had surreptitiously introduced themselves into the Castle, were examining the contents of one of the late Earl's trunks, which they had dragged from under the bed, and of which they had picked the lock.

One of these men knelt before the coffer, holding a bull's-eye lantern in one hand, while with the other he cautiously rummaged among the money-bags for a certain parchment, of which he was in search. A young and handsome man, but of profligate appearance, leant on the lid of the open box, and watched the

searcher; while an old man of Jewish features and with a black crape band round his white hat, and with a bunch of keys in his hand, superintended the movements of him of the fustian coat and drab gaiters.

Who and what were these three men, and what was their object? It was evident that no awe of the silent presence in the adjoining room, no dread of the King of Terrors influenced them. At the foot of the very bed on which, on the previous morning, the old Earl of Rockalpine had breathed his last, they were engaged in a search which, from the expression of their countenances, their whispers, their hurry, their pallor, their dark lantern and skeleton keys, we feel was a guilty, a nefarious enterprise.

\* \* \* \* \*

Yes, the old Earl of Rockalpine, with the snows of eighty-five winters on his thin and scattered locks, and with the deep lines that

a long life of avarice, suspicion, and worldly care, had indelibly ploughed into his cheeks and brow, lay in the marble rigidity of death; and, in spite of the marks with which Mammon stamps *his own*, among the sons of men, there was, on the finely-chiselled, aristocratic face of The Dead, that ineffable smile of heavenly peace which, we are told, never left the face of that "widow's son" on whom the Saviour had looked, and which we see on the still, cold lips of all who die in the Lord; and who, as the scenes of earth darken around them, behold the heavens opening, and the triune Jehovah inviting them to a blissful eternity.

The nurse, and the old woman whose office it is in the North to lay out, or "straik," the corpse, and whose duty it is to watch by it, were fast asleep, and a strong smell of whiskey pervaded the dressing-room.

There were many candles burning round the shell in which the old Earl lay awaiting

the leaden coffin, and the outer one covered with black velvet richly emblazoned, which was ordered of the great London undertaker, Mr. G——, and was to arrive with that great Lord High Chamberlain of the King of Terrors, at Rockalpine as soon as possible. But while the hirelings slept and snored, and the light of the dark yellow wax tapers fell unheeded on the sharp rigid outlines, which, beneath the sheet that covered the cold form, betrayed Death, there were yet evidences of the fact that “there is a tear for all who die.”

The season was unusually mild, and, although it was January, in sheltered nooks a few flowers lingered: and Edith had found some monthly roses and other pale blossoms in those sunny nooks, and, with some sprays of myrtle from the conservatory, she had made three wreaths, which she had placed in the old man's coffin—one on his still, cold breast, once so warm and animated for her, one at

the head, and one at the foot, and the "Death Watchers" had not dared to remove them, although all their delight was in rue, rosemary, and southernwood, with which they had filled the coffin, and the dried leaves of which emitted a faint and deadly odour.

\* \* \* \* \*

We have said that in the late Earl's bedroom three midnight marauders were at work, safe from intrusion, as they thought, in the dread, solemn presence of the Dead in the adjoining room, and in the deep sleep of the half-tipsy watchers. Yes, there they were, examining the contents of a trunk, which the Earl was known to keep under the head of his bed, and of which, it was said, he never trusted the key to anyone, nor, indeed, ever opened it in the presence of any other person.

Some fifteen years before, the Earl had made a will leaving the whole of his long-hoarded wealth, and everything, in short, that

was not strictly entailed, to Brian Lorraine, Lord Hauteville's eldest son, the same who, at Eton and Oxford, had been brought up with Roger Croft, the son of the Marquis of Dunstanburgh, the rest of the "fast set," and with Arthur; only Brian, the son of the moody fratricide, Lord Hauteville, and his worldly, ambitious, and unfeeling wife, was a bad boy, and a worse man. He was mean, crafty, cruel, at once a bully and a sneak. He was very unpopular at Eton, and narrowly escaped expulsion there. At Oxford he was shunned and "cut" by all, even of the "fast set," who hated everything base and unmanly.

Brian Lorraine, in spite of the old Norman blood in his veins, liked low company. He was fond of drinking and smoking with bad, disreputable fellows, with whom he would sit "cheek by jowl," apparently on an equality, taking liberties with them; but if any one of them retaliated, then he would fall back on

his dignity, his birth, and expectations, and gave evidences of a pride much meaner than his humility.

Lord and Lady Hauteville did all they could to reform him, and to conceal his degrading delinquencies, but they considered him a disgrace to the family. They tried sending him abroad with a strict tutor. They were especially anxious that his grandfather, the old Earl of Rockalpine, should have no inkling of his misdemeanours, as his lordship had a great notion of the rights of primogeniture, and had consequently made a will in Brian's favour ; but the late Earl had, also, so intense and ineffable a horror of all that is "*fast*," "*varmint*," "*slang*," mean, profligate and vicious, that Lord and Lady Hauteville felt quite certain that the slightest suspicion of what Brian really was, would make his lordship forbid him his house, and, still worse, exclude him from all share in his "personalty."



That knowledge, in spite of all their precautions, the Earl obtained. His Lordship said nothing ; he appeared to take for granted all that Lady Hauteville said about dear Brian's love of study, and the illnesses brought on by his devotion to Latin, Greek, and Mathematics ! The old man chuckled when severe illness, from this cause, was pleaded by the false, worldly mother as an excuse for her son's not being able to spend a month with his grandfather at Rockalpine Castle ; for just at this time it had come to his lordship's knowledge that Brian Lorraine had been severely mauled by a set of low, drunken, cock-fighting, badger-baiting fellows, for refusing a stand-up fight with one of them, whom he had insulted.

Coeval with events so disgusting, so revolting to the aristocratic tastes and feelings of the thoroughbred old nobleman, was the dawn on his soul of that sudden, singular sunshine of Grace, so often reflected, from the trusting,

believing heart of childhood, on the hardened, darkened, despairing mind of infidel old age.

Often has some little Sunday-school girl, with her hymns, her collects, her texts, and her tracts, awakened the conscience of the aged pitman, who has passed through life in darkness, physical, moral, and spiritual; often has she been the instrument used by the All-wise to save his soul. And so, the reader will remember, it was with Edith and her grandfather.

Ere long, without any hint or intimation of his intentions to Lord and Lady Hauteville (in neither of whom he felt the slightest confidence), the old man altered his will. Everything which some years before he had left to Brian (as the eldest son of his heir), he now bequeathed to Edith. Mr. Croft, who made the new will for his lordship, knew this, and kept the old Earl's secret, except from his wife and Roger. Edith knew it from her

grandfather himself; but the poor, loving child, who inwardly consecrated all this wealth to her devoted Arthur, and who knew how her family would grudge it to *her*, and still more to *him*, never, of course, alluded to the subject at all. Still, a rumour of a change in the old Earl's testamentary dispositions *has* reached Brian Lorraine.

There was an under-gamekeeper at that time at Rockalpine, one Jock Moss, in reality a very bad fellow, but who was a sort of crony of young Brian Lorraine's; and from such a source as this Brian was not ashamed to derive any knowledge essential to his *interests*, as he called them.

## CHAPTER XI.

“I know a maiden, fair to see;  
Take care!  
She can both false and friendly be;  
Beware! beware!  
Trust her not,—  
She is fooling thee.”

LONGFELLOW.

THIS Jock Moss had a beautiful sister, who was parlour-maid and needlewoman at Rock-alpine Castle; but she had been for some years a sort of humble companion to a lady of fashion, who had educated her to please herself, and had left her destitute! This girl had formed the ambitious design of being one day mistress at the Castle, and of ruling, with a rod of iron,

the strict, exacting old housekeeper, who had kept so tight a hand over her !

Marion Moss was (as so many of the Border lasses are) singularly lovely, both in form and face, but ambitious, rapacious, plotting, gentle—but it was the gentleness of the panther—and fierce, with the fierceness of that beautiful and perilous creature. Marion Moss had a brow and smile all candour, and a heart all guile. She played the "*Pamela*" to perfection, and Brian Lorraine, madly in love with her, having totally failed in his persevering and base attempts to get her on his own terms, had been obliged to yield to hers, and therefore had resolved on marrying her ; and she had resolved on marrying him, but plenty of money was included in the prospective arrangements of both.

In spite of Brian's passionate impatience, Marion was resolved not to go to the altar with him until he had followed his grand-

father to the grave, and had become possessed of the hoards of wealth included in the "personalty" of the old Earl. We know that at one time the whole of that personalty had been bequeathed to Brian. Formerly Lord Hauteville had been a great favourite of his father's, who had preferred him to his elder born; but many things had concurred to change the old man's feelings; and the great influx of wealth, which became Lord Hauteville's in right of his wife, at the death of her father, the millionaire, Sir James Armstrong, had decided the old Earl on leaving his own wealth to Brian.

The knowledge of this fact made Brian fair and charming in Marion's roe-like eyes, in spite of that look of habitual intemperance so odious and disgusting on the soft face of youth. It was Marion who had discovered the great family secret, so closely concealed from the Hautevilles and all the world, save Edith

and the Crofts, namely, that the will in favour of Brian Lorraine had been cancelled by the old Earl's making another and more recent one, in which all his real and personal estate, plate, money, jewels, furniture, books, horses, carriages, stock, &c., &c., were bequeathed to his youngest and most beloved grandchild, Edith Lorraine.

By dint of close and indefatigable watching, Marion had discovered that this will in favour of Edith was, after being shifted by the old Earl from one hiding-place to another, from desk to drawer, and drawer to box, and box to bag, and bag to portmanteau, finally (a little while before his last fatal illness), concealed in a trunk or strong box, curiously plated and lined with iron, so as to be fire-proof. It was stowed away with several of the most valuable of the old Earl's cases of jewels, some articles of plate in pure gold, some important title-deeds, and pocket-books full of bank-notes,

and bags full of sovereigns. The will in Brian's favour had been deposited in its tin case, and in the iron safe of the London lawyer, Mr. Roper, who had drawn up the will.

Marion no sooner discovered that the old Earl was dying, and that Lord and Lady Hauteville, and, worse still, Edith, had been sent for by telegraph (Mr. Croft wording the telegram at the dying Earl's request), than she, too, sent off a letter to Brian, who was idling away his time in low haunts of vice in London. The letter ran thus:—

“Rockalpine Castle.

“MY DEAREST DEAR,

“The Earl is dying; he cannot last much longer. You told me long ago that directly he ceases to breathe, your father is Earl of Rockalpine, and you—oh! how I glory in the thought!—are Lord Hauteville! How I long to hail you as my lord—your lord—



ship! Then you want nothing but money. Well, I think I can manage that; but remember, whatever is to be done *by you know whom about you know what, must be done at once.* I know the exact spot; come down secretly by the express, get out at B—— station, meet me at father's cottage on the moor; I forgot to tell you that father's moved into what used to be Rough Rob's. Brother Jock and I will meet you there. Come with a clear head, a brave heart, and a steady hand; you'll want all three. Remember all you have at stake! Wealth which, yours, dear love, by every right, shall not, if I can help it, *pass by you*, to a whey-faced, canting little Methody. That wealth, once yours, you can afford to share it with one whom you say you love so dearly, and who, had she adored you less, would have seemed to love you more!

“Your own

“MARION.”

Old Kit Moss, father of Marion and Jock, was a cheating, lying, old scoundrel, with a plausible tongue, an itching palm, and a thirsty throttle. At one time he had been a locksmith, with a respectable, loving wife, and a couple of rosy, curly-headed children. He had always had a propensity to drink, but while his wife lived he did not often yield to it. When she died, which was when Jock was fourteen and Marion twelve, he gave way to it at once and for ever. Then he went down, down, down! until he shrunk into the miserable, poaching, begging-letter writing, sottish old fellow he was at the time of his taking Rough Rob's hovel on the moor. Jock and Marion, who, during their mother's lifetime had been carefully reared, cared for, taught and trained, both at school and at home, then ran wild. But when they were old enough for service, they, not liking the bare cupboard and semi-starvation, the cold

misery and dejection that always succeeds to the excitement of strong drink; and the tools recalling, as they did, happy days of honest industry and domestic comfort, he cried and moaned as he sorted and cleaned them.

The arrival of Brian did not put a stop to his moanings; only, instead of addressing them to himself, he addressed them to Master Brian, who, as great a tippler as himself, and on the eve of so nefarious and wicked an enterprise, was in no mood to listen to the wailings of a vague remorse and the groans of a morbid reaction.

Ere long Jock arrived at the place of rendezvous; and soon, rosy and radiant from her long, brisk walk, the hood of her red cloak setting off her glossy black hair, fine eyes, perfect features, and rich complexion, Marion Moss entered the hovel. She had dark thoughts in her mind, but she smiled a

bright smile when she saw Brian; and as she greeted him by his new title of Lord Hauteville, and wished him long life to enjoy his fresh honours, her serpentine and scarlet lips, of the colour of the berries of the mountain-ash, parted so as to disclose two rows of pearl. Her tall, slight form was the perfection of symmetry; and Lord Hauteville, who had not seen her for some months, was astonished by the brilliancy of her beauty; and the passion, which absence had in some degree subdued (as it does all sensual passions), now rekindled at the blaze of her loveliness, and burnt fiercer than ever.

Marion explained that the old housekeeper was confined to her bed, ill with grief at the death of the aged Earl, whom she had served faithfully for forty years, that all the servants were collected together for company (as they always are in the house of Death) in the servants' hall, afraid to go upstairs, or to

cross the hall alone! That she had stolen upstairs in the dark, and had peeped in at the door of the room where the Earl was laid out; that she had seen the still form under the sheet, and heard the three distinct snores of the red-faced bottle-nosed Death-Watchers. Nay, more; she had stood in the light of the tapers round the coffin, and had watched them in their sleep.

“And now,” she said, “if Lord Hauteville will see me safe home through the Black Wood, you, Father, and you, Jack, following in a little while, he can enter through the library window, which I’ve left unfastened; and you, Father, and you, Jack, must do the same. You’ll have to creep upstairs in the dark; I’ve not lighted the lamp in the hall, and Tallboys and Puff do nothing but blubber and shake, and sit over the fire, and are afraid to stir; so they won’t have seen about it. I’ve unlocked the bed-room door that opens on the

landing, so you won't have to go through the room where the body and the Death-Watchers are. Not that either the former or the latter will stir a finger—but no matter, it daunts some people to be where Death is, though I'm not one of them. Once in my late Lord's bedchamber, you've only to pull the trunk from under the bed, to get possession of the will, and then be off back here with all speed; and I'll now make up a glorious fire, and we'll burn the will to ashes. So lend a hand, Jock, and get me some peat and some of those dry old thorn roots out of the shed."

The fire was soon prepared, and Marion, with her queenly gait and elastic step, rose, and desiring Lord Hauteville to follow her, led the way across the moor.

"Wonderful creature!" said the new Lord Hauteville, as, offering her his arm, they hurried through the Black Wood. "Beautiful Marion! future Countess of Rockalpine! I

wish I could look forward to placing a crown on that brow, instead of a coronet! You would indeed grace a throne, sweet love!"

## CHAPTER XII.

"She has two eyes, so soft and brown,  
Take care!  
She gives a side glance, and looks down;  
Beware! beware!  
Trust her not,—  
She is fooling thee."

LONGFELLOW.

ALL happened as Marion had planned, and the midnight marauders were soon afterwards diligently pursuing their search. Old Kit Moss, with his skeleton-keys in his hand; Jock, with a bull's-eye lantern in his, bringing its light to bear on the hoarded treasures of the dead man's life; and the new Lord Hauteville eagerly prying into the contents of the trunk in search of the will. That search, how-



ever, was a vain one. There were the bags of gold, the pocket-books full of bank-notes, the gold plate, the cases of jewels, the title-deeds of this farm, that estate! But the will in question was not to be found!—it was not there!

Marion, to avoid the shadow of suspicion, had rejoined the rest of the servants, male and female, assembled in the servants' hall.

\* \* \* \* \*

There was a rapacious glitter in the eye of old Kit—it was reflected in that of Jock—but the presence of Lord Hauteville restrained them, else the gold and the bank-notes were very tempting. But Brian (Lord Hauteville), who was base enough to rob the dead of a will, and the living of her inheritance, had not yet sunk into a common robber. He ordered Jock and old Kit to restore the lock, fasten up the trunk, and replace it under the head of the bed.

Love (or what *he* called by the name) was at that moment the master-passion of his breast. He longed to be again with Marion —beautiful, bewitching, bewildering Marion! —who had been kinder, more tender, more loving (as they had passed arm-in-arm through the Black Wood) than he had ever known her before. It did not occur to him that his having become Lord Hauteville made any difference in her feelings towards him.

“I am loved! I am loved! Jubilate!” he said to himself, as, bidding his disappointed accomplices to follow, he, in hopes of overtaking Marion on her way to the hovel on the moor, stole down-stairs in the dark to let himself out at the library window. But a peril, on which Lord Hauteville had not calculated, lay in wait for him.

While lying moaning in her bed, a strange fear had begun to flutter at the old house-keeper’s heart. It was, that the Death-

watchers (prone as she well knew them to be "to keep their spirits up by pouring spirits down," and often as she had on other occasions supplied them with whiskey on the plea that "grief is dry," and "death-watching thirsty work") would get tipsy, and set the house on fire. And her great dread and horror, connected with so frightful a probability, was, not that she herself, or the present Earl and Countess, or Edith (now Lady Edith Lorraine), or any of the servants, or the death-watchers themselves, should be burnt to death; but lest the only one in the house who could never feel bodily pain more, should be consumed by fire instead of going in a many-plumed hearse, followed by a train of mourning coaches, to be buried in state, as she well remembered the late Earl's father had been, and to be lowered into the vault where his ancestors, for hundreds of years, had been lying.

At this, to her, unbearable thought (for her one comfort in his death was the idea of the solemn magnificence of his funeral), the good old soul had jumped out of bed, thrown on her white wrapper, and, candle in hand, had hurried along a corridor, and across the landing, just as the new Lord Hanteville had stolen out at the half-open door, and, unseen by her (taking a peep at the old lady, and suppressing a laugh at her towering night-cap), had hurried down-stairs in the dark. Once at the bottom, he groped his way across the hall, and to the library-window, and was soon once again hurrying across the garden, through the meadow, and out into the Black Wood.

The old housekeeper then made her way, with a beating heart and weeping eyes, to the dead Earl's dressing-room. The death-watchers still snored and slept, and slept and snored; but there was one watcher there,

who did not, could not sleep. It was Edith, who, before retiring for the night, had stolen to the coffin-side, to print one long kiss of gratitude and love on the icy brow of the Dead. She had such good reason to believe that she had been the humble means of reconciling him to his Saviour, and of securing him a mansion among the Blest; and he, too, had so loved and cherished *her*!

“ Oh, miss—I beg your pardon, my lady, I mean—Lady Edith, don’t he look happy? Oh, ain’t he a handsome corpse? And to think of these old drunken sarpients, hired and paid high to watch, and a snoring there like sows, and smelling of whiskey fit to pison one! I’ve a mind to shake the breath out of their vile bodies, that I have!”

“ Oh, let them sleep on!” said Edith.

“ What can it matter?”

“ Why, miss—my lady, I mean—they do say, none but wakeful watchers can keep the

Evil Spirit from flying away with the dear departed soul ; because, you see, my lady, just at first, the soul don't go quite away from the body like, but keeps hovering about its old abode, quite nat'ral ; and they do say, that's just the time the Evil Spirit is on the lookout to pounce down on it, and fly away with it."

" Oh, never fear that," said Edith. " The Evil Spirit has no power over the soul of a believer. The Saviour takes care of his own; the Good Shepherd watches over all who love Him and believe in Him, sheep and lambs !"

" I hope you're right, miss," said the old lady, reverently kissing her dead master's hand ; " but excuse me for saying, I do know from them as heard it from them who saw it, that the Evil One has carried off souls when the Death-Watchers slept."

\* \* \* \*

Meanwhile, Old Kit and his son Jock had

stolen down-stairs in the dark, had made their way safely out through the library window, across the grounds, through the meadows and the Black Wood, and had reached Rough Rob's hovel on the moor a few minutes after the new Lord Hauteville and Marion had arrived there.

Brian, Lord Hauteville, had overtaken Marion Moss at the entrance of the Black Wood.

"My beautiful, my beloved one!" he cried, throwing his arm round her slight waist, "what rapture to find you here, and alone!"

He was thinking only of *her*—he was in love with *her*!

She cared little or nothing for him—she only thought of raising herself, of being "My Lady;" of having wealth at will, and, above all, of being one day Countess of Rockalpine, and mistress of the old housekeeper at the Castle, whom she had always been obliged to obey so promptly, to treat with such respect

and even reverence, and to call "ma'am," but who would then have to obey her, to bow down so humbly before her, and to call her "My Lady" and "Your Ladyship."

What "trifles make the sum of human things," and how important to the ambitious are some of the smallest items in the sum total of their anticipated greatness!

While Brian, Lord Hauteville, was, in spite of his title and his new dignity, thinking of nothing but Marion and her ravishing beauty—while some long-abandoned and base hopes and designs were, under the influence of her unwonted tenderness, again busy in his shallow brain and at his bad heart—her thoughts were not with him, save as the tool of her future greatness, the instrument to enable her to realise her ambitious hopes. He was only the Lord who was to make her "My Lady," *now*, and the future Earl through whom she was one day to be a Countess.



Never (blind, sensual, credulous fool that he was), never at any time of their clandestine intercourse had she been less likely to forget one iota of that system which alone could induce the wedlock-loathing profligate to marry her, than now that, in the solitude of the Black Wood, she suffers him to press her to his side, and to hold her hand and cover it with kisses.

“You frighten me, dearest, you do indeed, my lord,” she said. “I like to hear you say you love me, but you must not forget what I have often told you before; that to me even your love is terrible and unwelcome, if you forget the respect which the proudest lord in the land owes to the simplest village maiden who knows how to respect herself!”

The tone in which this was said awed the impetuous young lord; he was afraid. Marion was angry—he knew she *could* be very angry, and very unforgiving, too. He was no casuist

—he did not know how hard it is for true Love to resent even great injuries—how prone Affection is to forgive.

Marion did not love him—she did not even like him—all eloquently as she told him with her lips and eyes that she adored him! No, she did not love him; and once, when he had seriously offended her, she had refused to speak to him or to “make it up,” for three months. What if she should do so again?

At the thought he dropped her hand, and withdrew his arm from her waist, and humbly said, “Forgive me, Marion!”

“I do forgive you with all my heart, dear love!” said the wily girl, herself taking his hand and carrying it to her warm velvet lips. “I do forgive you; nay, more—alone in this Black Wood I will have no fear, for I will call upon you to protect me against yourself, against—myself!”

“*Against yourself!* Oh, my angel, Marion!

is it possible you need any protection against *my* love? and—oh! enchanting thought!—against *your own*? Do you, then, love me so well?”

“Hitherto, dear love,” said Marion, in her most beguiling tones, “I have depended solely on my own virtue : I now—no matter why—I now appeal to your honour !”

“You shall not appeal in vain then, sublime, enchanting, incomparable girl!” said the young lord, some latent spark of good in his darkened breast igniting at this appeal to his chivalry, his honour. “Believe me, Marion, if as a woman I love and dote on you, as a saint I honour, and obey, and reverence you !”

“Now you are my own dear noble Brian !” said Marion, “and we will not talk of love just now, it is a dangerous theme ; but tell me all about the will. You have it safe, I hope?”

“No, dearest ! did I not tell you of our

failure? The will was *not* in that trunk at all! It was not there—it is some mistake! I am in hopes the will you fancied my old grandfather had made, he *never did make*. He had a great and a very proper idea of the rights of primogeniture; and that being the case, it is not very likely he would bequeath his fabulous wealth to the little whey-faced, carrotty cripple, my sister Edith was then!”

“How long is it since your mother last saw your sister Edith?” said Marion.

“Oh, she had never seen her since she was placed with the Crofts till they met in Paris.”

“And was Lady Edith ever really a little whey-faced, carrotty cripple?” asked Marion.

“Yes; the most puny, pale, squalid, limping, silly little object I ever beheld; with a skin the colour of a primrose, a little, sharp, long face, and a quantity of carrotty hair, through which that pale, peaky face looked out as from a fire! The doctors said she’d be

sadly deformed too, a hunchback, in fact, and that one leg was already much shorter than the other !”

“So much for their wisdom !” said Marion. “Lady Edith is now as tall as I am, and has the finest, most slender shape I ever saw ; her hair is of a dark glossy auburn, with a golden light upon it. She is as beautiful as any angel, and moves like a queen. And I heard the Countess, your mother, say to the new Earl, your father, that the Crofts had been playing a very deep and double game, in concealing Lady Edith’s perfect recovery, and the wonderful change in her appearance !”

“She is changed,” said Lord Hauteville, “and so much the better for her ; but if she were as lovely as Helen of Troy, that would not have made my grandfather alter his will in her favour ; and I begin to hope and to believe that it’s all a mistake from beginning to end.”

“No! no! no!” said Marion, “it is no mistake; old Lawyer Croft drew out the will, and I was hid up in a closet, for your sake, Brian, and I even heard every word that was put into it! And I heard why the old man left everything to Lady Edith—it was because it was owing to *her* (at least, so he said) that he first began to think about his soul. Her little hymns and texts, and tracts, and collects, and prayers, had converted him. And I heard him say to old Croft that the least he could do for her, who had brought him to lay up treasures in Heaven, was to leave his earthly treasures to her, and that she was the only one who would act like the good steward in the Scriptures!”

“Well,” said Lord Hauteville, “if he *was* such a fool *then*, I hope before he died he saw the error of his ways, and the injustice of cutting me out of what I had been in a manner promised, and that he burnt that foolish, unfair

will. If it does not turn up, the one made in my favour *must* hold good ; and the old man's wealth once mine, Marion, I need consult nothing but my own heart and yours, and we will be married, my beautiful, bewitching, beloved Marion ! With your genius, wit, wisdom, grace, and beauty, the world will not trouble itself about the antecedents of so radiant a creature. My haughty mother, herself a *parvenue*, as I shall remind her if she refuses to visit *you*, may scold and storm, and sneer ; but I believe the Lady Hauteville *I* shall present to the great world, will queen it there as her dainty ladyship never did ! But here we are !”

Once more, before he lifted the latch, and entered her father's hovel, Marion raised his hand to her soft, warm lips, and then they sat down by the side of the noble fire which she had piled up before they went out. And in that golden and rubied light, Marion's

brilliant beauty seemed to justify to Lord Hauteville what he knew the world *would* call a *mésalliance*, and his family a disgrace.

She had thrown off her cloak and hood, and the fire-light played on the flowing outline and soft curves of her perfect face and graceful form. It brought out the lustre of her black eyes and the glitter of her small, white, even teeth.

The glow on her cheek, and the fire of her glance again set the selfish sensualist calculating possibilities; for even while he meditated what the world called "a love match" and a *sacrifice*, SELF REIGNED SUPREME.

Brian, Lord Hauteville, could outrage society, offend his parents, defy opinion, lower his pride, ignore his best interests, his ambition—do anything but sacrifice *self*, or rather *selfish passion*.

And yet even he tried to think of himself as a martyr to LOVE! But Love, true Love,



Love in its purest, noblest form, had nothing to do with the passionate impatience that brought the young lord, even in that rude hovel, on that stone floor, a kneeling, weeping suppliant to Marion's feet. But from this position he quickly rose, when he heard the heavy steps and gruff voices of his father and brother-in-law elect, at the wretched door of what once was Rough Rob's hovel!

## CHAPTER XIII.

"This is the house of death; the lights that steal  
Thro' shrouded casements, serve but to reveal  
The desolation."

ANON.

EVERYTHING was inexpressibly gloomy, still, and dreary in the darkened castle of Rockalpine. The arrangements for the funeral of the late Earl were on so grand and so magnificent a scale (such useless pomp, expense, and ceremonial being an hereditary custom of the house of Rockalpine in consigning dust to dust), that it was impossible to fix the day of the burial earlier than at a fortnight's date from the death of the old Earl.

The new Earl of Rockalpine (to whom quiet was a purgatory, and inaction a hell, so distinctly was the "still, small voice" heard in the silence and the gloom), felt sometimes as if Reason would give way before the phantoms which Memory and Imagination conjured up.

The ghost of his brother—his bright, beautiful, gifted, affectionate, noble brother—seemed to him, whenever he strolled into the grounds (to breathe the fresh air and feel the sun, so carefully excluded from the house of Death), to beckon him to that Black Wood where "the deed that damns eternally was done"—done four-and-twenty years before, and yet vivid, fresh, distinct in his memory as an event of yesterday.

At night, his terrors took the shape of hideous nightmares. In the howl of the wind he heard his brother's moan; if he accidentally glanced from his window on the

moon-lit grounds, he saw that pale, unrivalled face, that tall and noble form! Ever, to his fancy, the shade of his victim seemed, with upraised hand, to beckon him.

Lady Rockalpine and himself were become a fashionable pair. They had separate apartments. It was her ladyship's wish—and, indeed, her determination; for though he courted her presence as a sort of protection from the phantoms he for ever conjured up, she had several times been so frightened by his nightmares, and the terrors, shrieks, and groans that accompanied them, that she had resolved to insist on separate apartments.

She knew how essential to all beauties, but especially to one on the wane, is that greatest of restoratives, "balmy sleep," and her lord, who did not wish to have his *nightmares* trotted out, and paraded before the family physician, yielded in sullen silence to the arrangement she insisted on.

Everything connected with the recent funeral of his father recalled, with torturing distinctness, to the new Earl's mind, the death and burial of his brother. There were the same shrouded light, the same solemn stillness, the same woe-begone faces, stealthy steps, and low whisperings, and the same sickly, all-pervading scent of pastilles, burnt lavender, and other herbs, which the "Death-watchers" were burning in the chamber of the Dead, and the odour of which diffused itself all over the Castle.

Lady Rockalpine, who hated Death, and everything connected with the "King of Terrors" (as all the vain and worldly do), tried to divert her mind by a correspondence with Mesdames Roget, Laure, and Palmyre, the celebrated Parisian *artistes*, patronized by that *blonde* Empress and Empress of *blondes*, Eugenie *Impératrice*.

The Countess was engaged in elaborate con-

sultations with those great authorities, as to the most becoming style of mourning dresses, mantles, and bonnets to be adopted by herself and her daughters on their emerging from what she, like Anne Boleyn, called their "doleful prison in the Tower."

Whatever time this vain and frivolous woman did *not* spend in dress, and in consultations on this her ruling passion, she tried to get rid of in reading French novels, and in writing to, and answering letters from idle fashionables, as full of vanity and frivolity as herself.

In his Countess's company the wretched Earl of Rockalpine could, of course, find no solace. He tried the society of Edith, but she, in her deep grief at her grandfather's death, and in her great anxiety and distress about her beloved Arthur, from whom she had not heard, could converse freely but on one topic—RELIGION, and that topic was intolerable

to the guilty, world-stained man, who well knew he could not serve two masters, God and Mammon, and *would not* throw off the yoke of the latter.

Ida Lorraine, now Lady Ida, whom the Countess of Rockalpine had left in town, was sent for in a great hurry by her mother, because the Countess of Richlands had invited her to Richlands Park.

Between Lady Rockalpine and her daughter, Lady Richlands, there was a perpetual warfare, on account of the abode at Richlands Park of the unhappy Georgina, Contessa di Roccabella. For, frivolous as the Countess of Rockalpine was, she had deep feelings of revenge and malice in her composition. She never forgave an insult, an injury, or even a slight. She was implacable in the case of Georgina, the unhappy Contessa, because she had disappointed, deceived, and outwitted her. She was furious against her daughter Augusta,

Countess of Richlands, because she had sheltered, comforted, and upheld her wretched sister. For the same reason the Earl of Richlands was treated by Lady Rockalpine as a foe.

Again, she felt a bitter sense of anger and revenge against Mrs. Croft, for the deception which she considered the latter had practised upon her, about Edith's health and appearance. And she included in her resentment and her rage (she scarce knew why), poor Arthur Bertram, Mr. Croft's grandson; for she felt that he was just the intellectual, manly creature a girl like Edith would naturally (in so close an intimacy as theirs had been from childhood) learn to love and revere.

She had considerable shrewdness, too, and she had seen at a glance, when she beheld Edith and Arthur dancing together at the Ambassador's Ball at Paris, that they loved each



other. *Her* daughter love old Croft's grandson!—oh, it was a thing too degrading to contemplate! Besides, she had set her heart on Edith's marrying the young Marquis of Dunstanburgh, and she hated Arthur Bertram because she felt an instinctive conviction that he would be the barrier to so grand a match, and so desirable a union for Edith, and so delightful a connection for herself.

She hated her son Brian, Lord Hauteville, too, because he was a disgrace to the family—because he loved low company—and had blotched and blurred a naturally handsome face, and bloated and puffed out a good figure by the lowest kind of intemperance. She felt sure, too, that if he ever married, it would be some one far beneath him, and she thought of *him* with a shudder.

With regard to her affections, she had some little tenderness for Ida, and some liking for Edith (now that she was so beautiful, and so

beloved by a Marquis); and she had a flimsy, demonstrative kind of friendship for some gaudy fashionables—male and female—together with a coaxing adoration of a little French poodle (a toy-dog) called Snowball; and he was, indeed, her chief companion and playmate at Rockalpine Castle.

Snowball was certainly a beautiful, affectionate, and intelligent creature, about the size of a full-grown squirrel, but covered all over, face, body, and feet, with little, thick flossy ringlets of silvery white. His face was beyond description pretty, and so were his tiny, thoroughbred paws. He could dance, beg, sit up, fetch, carry, shut the door; and, in short, was at once very accomplished and very intelligent. He was exclusive in his love for Lady Rockalpine, save in the case of Edith, to whom he vouchsafed many little tokens of favour, licking her hand with his small peach-blossom tongue, barking a little glad, musical bark at

her approach, and sometimes even deigning to spring up on her lap.

\* \* \* \* \*

One evening Edith, oppressed by the general gloom, and haunted by anxiety about Arthur, opened the glass door of the library, in which she had been sitting alone, and throwing a warm shawl over her head and person, walked out upon the moonlit terrace.

It was a beautiful, bright evening, very mild for the season of the year ; and so much did she feel refreshed by the cool air, that she wandered on through the grounds until she came to a little summer-house which in their childhood's days (now so long ago) Edith Lorraine and Arthur Bertram had been used to call their castle, and to defend from the assaults of the little Croft girls, when they were all staying at Rockalpine.

This part of the garden was divided only by a low, iron fence from the brook and the strip

of grass land which separated it from the Black Wood.

The Black Wood had no terrors for Lady Edith; and she entered the summer-house, so full of the ghosts of the past. As Edith sank on a rustic seat, almost unconsciously to herself her secret thoughts stole from her lips in the words of a little duet, which she had been wont to sing with Arthur Bertram—

“Come to me!—come to me!  
Over the dark blue sea.  
I pine—I long for thee,  
Choice of my heart!”

What well-known, well-loved voice catches up the strain? First pale, then red, now cold, now hot, the maiden starts up with ear attent, while a rich, manly voice responds—

“Dearest, I come to thee,  
Over the dark blue sea.  
Say, wilt thou dwell with me,  
Never to part?”

It was no dream. A tall shadow fell on

the door, as, with a bound, clearing the fences, Arthur was by his Edith's side. Yes, he was there; and, after a few moments, in which the tumultuous happiness of both forbade either to speak, Arthur explained that his grandfather, Mr. Croft, had sent for him peremptorily, to be present at the reading of the late Earl's will, but why his presence was required Arthur did not know. All he knew, all he felt, was, that he should be near his Edith, and that was enough for him.

"I came down here, my love, the day before yesterday," he said, "and I have spent my time, chiefly, in roaming about night and day, hoping to catch a glimpse of your form in the gardens, and gazing at the light from what I heard from Mr. Croft was your window."

Not long would Edith allow her Arthur to linger—not long would he have presumed to stay by her side.

They parted, cheered and solaced by that brief, unexpected meeting. As they clung together in a long, parting embrace, little did they dream how soon they would meet again !

## CHAPTER XIV.

“ Pauline ! look up, Pauline !  
Thou art safe ! ”

*Lady of Lyons.*

IN the dead of the night, a shrill, wild cry of “ Fire ! ” rang through Rockalpine Castle ; and the Earl, the Countess, Lady Ida, and the terrified servants looked from their doors, in their white night-dresses, and pale as death, all asking what that shriek meant—all distinctly smelling the fire and the smoke, and all bent solely on saving themselves.

It was as the old housekeeper had feared. One of the Death-Watchers, in her high cauled nightcap, had, in her drunken sleep,

fallen against one of the wax tapers placed round the coffin—a spark had dropped on her cap border, and in a few moments she was on fire.

Edith, who, as was her wont, before going to bed, had stolen to her grandfather's room to kiss the cold, cold brow, for the last time (for at dawn he was to be shut for ever from her sight), opened the door of the chamber of Death, just as the fire, smouldering in the garments of one of the Death-Watchers, was communicating itself to those of her neighbours.

Edith's piercing screams aroused them to the sense of their danger. Sobered at once, they rushed from the room, and on the landing, at the bottom of the stairs, were met by the old housekeeper, who, the first to hear that shriek of Edith's and her agonised reiterated cries of "Fire!" had roused the men-servants who slept down stairs, and who were bringing



up pails of water to the scene of the conflagration.

In spite of the old housekeeper, whose sole care was for her dead master, the men *wasted* (as she called it) the water in putting out the flames that would soon have consumed the Death-Watchers. Meanwhile, Edith did her best to keep the raging element from her beloved grandfather's remains.

It was a strange sight. There lay the old man, from whose marble face and rigid form she had plucked the sheet, lest it should catch fire—the fire-light lending an almost life-like glow and play to his still, marble features, and Edith perilling her young life, at the imminent risk of perishing by fire, to save the sacred remains of the inanimate, the senseless Dead.

Alas! she has used all the water in the room—the smoke begins to darken the air, and to choke, to smother her. The flames

have luckily taken a direction away from the coffin and towards the door. Suddenly, consciousness forsakes her—she sinks on the ground; when, lo! one of the windows of the room is forced open from without—the wind drives the flames fiercely towards her—but a dear voice recalls her to life—a strong arm is thrown around her!

Arthur Bertram, once again her guardian angel, raises her from the ground, and bears her in safety out of the room, just as, headed by the old housekeeper, the men-servants with cans and buckets of water rush in.

The fire is got under. The old housekeeper, at the risk of her own life, ascertains that her “blessed master’s body is safe,” and that he will yet be buried as his fathers were—that is, be borne in the plumed hearse, followed by the train of black coaches to the family vault. The danger over, Lord Rock-alpine came forth. Arthur Bertram then ex-

.

plained that from a distance he had seen at the window the red glare which betrayed the fire; that he had, by the aid of the terrace and the ivy, scaled the wall, and had burst in at the window, in time to save the Lady Edith. He did not add that he was wandering about the grounds to watch the light in her chamber, when the red glare in the window of the late Earl's dressing-room caught his eye.

The Earl asked him no questions. He coldly and haughtily thanked him, and offered him a bed at the Castle, but the manner in which he did this was so imperious and contemptuous (the Earl remarking that there were no rooms unoccupied, save in the servants' attic, but that Croft, his grandfather, had occasionally slept there), that Arthur declined and took his leave—Edith, in spite of her father's presence, holding out her hands to him and saying, "Heaven bless you, Arthur Bertram! You have again saved my life!

How can I ever reward you?" To which Arthur had replied, "I am overpaid, Edith, in seeing you safe."

And thus they parted, the Earl angrily saying to Edith, "Go to bed. I am surprised that a daughter of mine should suffer a grandson of an attorney to address her, as that low upstart has addressed you, even in my presence. Not but what the odious and degrading familiarity began with you! Go to your room, and remember, if that young man appears before you again, I forbid you to exchange a word with him!"

Edith went in tears to her sleepless pillow, which was haunted by Arthur's dear face and form.

The Earl's pillow, too, was sleepless, and it was also haunted by the same face and form, and vividly did they recall those of one who had for four-and-twenty years been mouldering in the grave, but who seemed to live again, in

the shape of old Croft's detested, insulted, and despised grandson—Arthur Bertram!

The young Marquis of Dunstanburgh was, as we have said, a near neighbour of the Earl of Rockalpine's, in Northumberland. The late Earl and the late father of the present Marquis had been young men together. They had been chums at Eton and friends at Oxford; they had made (as was the fashion of their day) the "grand tour" (that is to say, travelled all over Europe) together; and, till avarice contracted the Earl's heart and soul, and diplomacy engrossed the Marquis's mind, there had been a sort of friendship between them. But when the Earl retired from the world, to hoard money at Rockalpine Castle, and the Marquis was sent as ambassador to the Court of —, their intercourse ceased.

Of the Rockalpine family, the principal seat was near A—, in Northumberland.

The Marquis of Dunstanburgh had, besides his vast estate called Dunstanburgh (on the Borders), a noble park in England, and an old castle in Wales. The grounds of Rock-alpine and those of Dunstanburgh ran side by side down to the North Sea, and the Black Wood of the former was only divided by a brook from a wild forest of wind-beaten firs belonging to the latter.

The young Marquis, more in love than ever with Edith Lorraine, after her appearance at the English Ambassador's at Paris, and after the effect she had produced there, found that every place where she was *not* was a wilderness, just as every place where she *was* had seemed an Eden !

He had hinted at his attachment for Edith to her encouraging and delighted mother; and but for the sudden news of the old Earl's danger, he would have implored her ladyship's advocacy of his suit, and have entreated her

permission to offer his hand and heart to her daughter Edith.

The poor girl had had a fortunate escape ; for had the young Marquis positively declared himself to the then Lady Hauteville, as a suitor for her youngest daughter's hand, Edith would have found herself in a sort of purgatory. The persecution she would have had to endure, would have rendered her life a martyrdom, and yet nothing would have induced her to yield, for she was devoted heart and soul to Arthur Bertram ; and though she was far too dutiful, delicate, and right-minded to disobey, even the mother who had sent her away from her for years, and marry Arthur, yet, at the same time, she was determined never to become the wife of any other man.

The sudden summons to England, on account of the old Earl's alarming state, and the telegram that awaited Lord and Lady Haute-

ville on their arrival in town, put a stop for a short time to any further advances on the part of the Marquis of Dunstanburgh. Even Lady Rockalpine, much as she thought about the triumph of this brilliant alliance, and broadly as she hinted at it to her dozen "dearest friends" (in the world of fashion), could not indulge in any actual match-making while the old Earl lay dead in the house ; but she only awaited his interment, to convert her flattering hopes into enchanting certainties ; then, should the young Marquis be invited to the Castle, and a formal engagement should be entered into, so that she could explain to her "dear friends" all she had hinted at, and be the envy of all the mammas of Belgravia and Mayfair, just as Edith would be that of their daughters.

But, impatient as the Countess of Rockalpine was, the young Marquis was still more



so. He startled Roger Croft by the announcement that he had resolved on following Edith to Rockalpine.

The news of the old Earl's death had, by this time, reached Paris, and the young Marquis suddenly discovered that, as the nearest neighbour of the deceased, and on account of the former intimacy existing between the families at Dunstanburgh Abbey and Rockalpine Castle, he ought to attend the funeral.

"I shall then," he said to Roger Croft (little dreaming what hopes and plans he was overthrowing), "see that angelic girl, Edith, our Edith, *my* Edith, I may almost say, for I have hinted at my attachment for the darling, to her mother, and, spite of all that would-be fine lady's acquired *retenu* and reserve, her delight almost overpowered her."

"But Edith herself?" stammered Roger Croft, who himself loved Edith with such a love as he could feel, admired her beyond all

expression, and had very long fed his ambition with the idea of marrying a *Lady* Edith, an Earl's daughter, and his cupidity, with the thought of the wealth which he knew the late Lord Rockalpine had bequeathed to her. "But Edith herself—have you any hopes?"

"*Lady* Edith Lorraine!" said the young Marquis, not a little nettled by the doubt. He spoke haughtily (he could be very haughty when he chose). "You must learn to think and speak of her not merely as the Lady Edith, but by a much higher title—as the Marchioness of Dunstanburgh!"

Roger Croft's brow darkened. He knew Edith had no love, no liking even, for the Marquis. His inordinate vanity made him really believe that she did admire, if not love himself. His mother had always assured him that no girl could inhabit the same house with him, without appreciating, admiring, and adoring him; and that, with regard to Arthur

Bertram, she knew for a certainty that Edith's feelings towards *him* were those of a sister towards a brother.

Roger, conceited fool, coxcomb, fortune-hunter, ass, that he was, so fully believed that Edith would one day be his, that he had reckoned on her fortune as a certainty, and had even tried to borrow of a Jew, upon what he called the security of her property.

What reason could the Marquis have for speaking with such certainty of an event so ruinous to all his, Roger Croft's, hopes and plans, as a marriage between his lordship and Lady Edith?

Roger Croft controlled his feelings, and tried to elicit what had passed on the subject between the Marquis, Edith, and her mother, but he was completely foiled. The great man was, as Roger afterwards told his mother, "deuced dry, and as close as wax."

The fact was, his lordship had, in reality,

nothing to communicate, but he was not at all disposed to allow Roger Croft to discover that fact. His lordship's pretensions were, if not as ridiculous, quite as unfounded as those of the attorney's son. To avoid Roger Croft's ill-bred and irritating cross-questioning, the Marquis drew himself up, entrenched himself in his dignity, or, as Roger told his mother, "gave him the cold shoulder," and actually left Paris for Northumberland, without letting his toady tyrant know that he was going.

Vile was the rage, and viler still the vengeance that filled Roger Croft's bad heart at this act of haughty independence in one who hitherto (little as he suspected it) had been but as a puppet, of which Roger Croft pulled the wires. But he was gone, and Roger was resolved to go too! Arthur Bertram had already been sent for by his grandfather; and Mrs. Croft, now Edith was gone, finding little notice was taken in Paris of herself and Glori-

ana, resolved to cut short her stay in that gay city, and to return at once to Croft Villa.

“Roger,” she said to herself, “the dear, rash boy!—is so madly in love with the Lady Edith Lorraine (she liked to couple them together, even to herself), that if I am not there to counsel and to warn him, he may induce her to elope with him, while she is a minor, and get into great trouble; perhaps be imprisoned for two years, as I remember that young Wakefield was, who ran away with a Miss Turner. I don’t think, even if he did, that the colossal fortune the old Earl left her *absolutely* can be touched; but I’m not at all sure her father couldn’t get the marriage dissolved, and my dear, beautiful Roger imprisoned! Besides, who can tell? Lady Edith can’t endure the Marquis, but Gloriana is quite in love with him, and he has often been very attentive to her. Many a heart has been caught on the rebound. I feel I ought to be

on the spot, both for Roger's sake and Gloriana's."

\* \* \* \* \*

Forty-eight hours later, Mrs. Croft and Gloriana were at Croft Villa. There, too, Arthur Bertram and Roger had met. There Mrs. Croft found them, in the library; Arthur apparently poring over a book, Roger smoking a cigar and drinking brandy-punch; but both, in reality, thinking of but one object—the Lady Edith Lorraine!

Arthur Bertram had not again presented himself at the Castle. The extreme *hauteur* and insolence of the new Earl's behaviour to him, on the night of the fire, had rendered it impossible for him to enter Edith's home again. He could not forget the contempt with which the Earl had said he could have a bed in the servants' attic, implying, as it did, that he looked upon him as little better than a menial. In the fulness of his heart he mentioned the

circumstance to his grandfather, and he was startled at the effect the narrative produced on the now pale grey and quiet old man.

He started to his feet when Arthur mentioned the Earl's offer of a bed in the servants' attic, and, while his primrose face glowed like fire, and his pale weak eyes seemed to emit phosphoric rays of wrath, he almost shrieked, clenching his thin hands, and stamping his feet—

“Ah! did he dare so to insult one who——  
But no matter. A few days—a very few days—and he'll change his tone. A bed in the servants' attic, and for *you*! I wonder the God of Justice did not strike him dead on the spot! Ah! I have not forgotten—nay, I have hoarded up for years the memory of his insults to me. Arthur, listen: I am a self-made man, but I am not a low-born man. My father, once Croft of Croft, squandered his property, and I was brought up in a charity school—a

charity school which my ancestors helped to found. I did not think it was known, Arthur; but that insolent lad—he was but a lad then—Wilfred Lorraine—he was not Lord Hauteville then—taunted me with it, in a room full of people—in the presence of my own servant he jeered and flouted at me, and called me ‘Blue-coat boy;’ and I vowed to be revenged on him. I never forgave him, *and I never will*. And now, now has he dared to insult you, and to offer you a bed in his servants’ attic? Oh! I’m glad of it—I’m glad of it, Arthur! Revenge is sweet—so sweet, so sweet, so sweet!” And he rubbed his thin old hands, and almost danced in his horrible and unnatural delight.

“Forgiveness is much sweeter, dear grandfather!” said Arthur, shocked and even alarmed at the unwonted excitement of the usually impassive, grave, and professionally dignified old lawyer.



“Ha! ha! ha!” laughed old Croft; “I’ll forgive him when I’ve had my revenge; but not before, Arthur—not before!”

## CHAPTER XV.

“Come, let the burial rite be read,  
The funeral song be sung.”

EDGAR POE.

THE day of the late Earl's grand funeral approached; the Earl and Countess of Rockalpine, who felt that their son, Lord Hauteville, ought in common decency to pay the last tribute of respect to him who had, as they supposed, left him all that was not strictly entailed, left no effort untried to discover in what low haunt of dissipation this disgrace to his family was lurking.

Little did they imagine that, while the Earl had actually written to Detectives Meadows

and Ferret, to urge them to find out the hiding-place of his son, that son was lurking in a little cottage on the Rockalpine estate. Little—when it became known that the beautiful parlour-maid, Marion Moss, had secretly left the Castle—little did they associate her departure with the continued absence of their profligate and self-willed son.

Yet so it was. Brian's passion for Marion, fostered by her strange, fitful behaviour, had grown to such a madness, that even at such a time, while his grandfather lay yet unburied in his coffin, the selfish, sensual, and passionate man had but one thought, one feeling, one dream, one object in life—Marion! Marion! Marion!

One night, he suddenly appeared before her, in her father's and brother's absence, as she sat musing alone by the wood and peat fire, in the hovel that had once been Rough Rob's. His cheek was livid, his eyes were

wild, the touch of his hand almost scorched her.

Marion was very brave, but even she was terrified. There were none near, and the expression of his eyes made her heart stand still.

It was a positive relief to her when he took a parchment from his pocket, and falling on his knees before her, spread it out on her lap.

It was a special licence. He had been absent for two days, and this had been his object.

"Marion," he cried, "I can live no longer without you! This night—this very night—you must be my wife; this night or never! If you refuse me, Marion, I have another bride awaiting me. Would you know her name, cruel girl? Her name is—DEATH!"

He sprang to his feet at the word, dashed the large hot tears from his eyes, and taking a pistol from his breast-pocket, held it to his

head, and was about to fire, when Marion shrieked aloud—

“No, no, no!—I consent! Brian, when you will, I will be your wife!”

She sank back fainting on the old wooden settle in the ingle nook, and he was again at her feet; again the large tears gushed forth, as he covered her hands with kisses. At length he said—

“Marion, my love—my bride—my wife, all is arranged! At the Mill Cottage, where I have been hiding, your father, Jock, and a clergyman—an old college friend of mine—await us. That must be your home—my home, beloved one, till the day of the funeral, when, by my grandfather’s will, fabulous wealth will be ours.”

Marion started and turned pale. What if the other, the second will, should yet be found?

He read her thoughts, drew back, and thrust his hand into his breast.

"No! no!" she cried, "I am ready. I will go with you to the Mill Cottage. I little thought," she added with a pout, "to have been married in this old gown!"

"I will make that up to you, dear love! You shall blaze in diamonds and white satin, as the fairest bride at the birthday Drawing Room."

These words decided Marion. What other chance had she of being "My Lady," or of going to Court?

\* \* \* \* \*

At the Mill Cottage, in the presence of old Kit and Jock, the Rev. Copal Blackatter, a disreputable hack parson, joined the hands of Brian, Lord Hauteville, bachelor, and Marion Moss, spinster. By special licence such a marriage was valid.

The Rev. Copal Blackatter, old Kit, and

Jock hurried away to get tipsy at the nearest public-house, and the bride and bridegroom, Lord and Lady Hauteville, remained at the Mill Cottage.

## CHAPTER XVI.

"The maiden's vanity, the lover's passion,  
Must always end in something of this fashion :  
She frets to find him weary of her charms—  
He thinks no fetters heavier than her arms."

LASCELLES.

THE evening before the funeral, Marion, Lady Hauteville, who had been ill from nervous excitement at the idea of being actually "My Lady," was lying on a sofa near the window, in the absence of Lord Hauteville, who already began to pine for some new excitement, and to grow weary of his bride, and the monotonous confinement of the Mill Cottage.

The little maid of the mill was sitting with her ladyship, for company to the latter, and



had fallen asleep over her knitting, when suddenly the faint remaining light was darkened, and a shadow thrown on a novel Marion was reading ; and looking round, she beheld a strange red, black-whiskered face peering in at her through the cottage window-pane.

Instinctively she felt it was a Detective. She was right ; it was Detective Meadows. Ever since the receipt of the Earl's letter, he had been engaged in a vain search after Lord Hauteville. At last he had got a clue—he was on his track—and withdrawing from the window, he concealed himself behind a tree until Lord Hauteville (about midnight) arrived at his bridal home, when Mr. Meadows followed him into the little cottage parlour.

The red face, sharp black eyes, and bushy dark whiskers of Detective Meadows were not quite unknown to Lord Hauteville.

It was the first time the clever Detective had been tracking his lordship ; but many of

those with whom Hauteville, when he was Brian Lorraine, had delighted to associate, had been the objects of the Detective's astute and persevering pursuit. Prize-fighters who had killed their men, jockeys who had played some deep, unfair game, gamblers who kept some secret hell—as with all such outcasts of society Lord Hauteville had been wont to associate, the face of Detective Meadows was familiar to him.

Marion, who was still lying on her couch reading a novel when her husband returned, and who, though she did not love him, was much nettled at his long absence, and the sudden indifference which had succeeded to his passionate idolatry, did not look up when her lord entered. She pouted her pretty lips and went on reading, pretending not to see him; but her heightened colour and quickened breathing showed that she was well aware of his presence. They had had a little tiff before

he went out, and she, conscious that a few days before he would not have rested till she had forgiven him, had been boiling over with indignation at this, to her, incomprehensible change in the man of whom she had so long been the tyrant, but who could now retaliate.

Had Marion known the human heart better, she would have been aware that while Love as an affection increases *after* marriage, Love as a passion seldom survives the honeymoon ; and, with some very coarse natures, as in the case of Brian, Lord Hauteville, it is extinguished in a few days.

Lord Hauteville, who, on his side (now completely sated) began to repent of his silly love-match, and to hate the fetters which already galled him, entered the little cottage parlour with an insolent, reckless air, puffing a cigar, smelling of spirits, and occasionally, as he took his cigar from his mouth, singing

his once-favourite song, called "Bachelor's Fare":—

"Free from satiety,  
Care, and anxiety,  
Charms of variety  
Fall to his share.  
Bacchus's blisses,  
And Venus's kisses—  
This, boys—this is  
The bachelor's fare."

As he rounded off the last words, Detective Meadows touched him on the shoulder.

"Hallo, Meadows, old boy! what do you want with me?" said Lord Hauteville.

"Well, my lord," said the Detective, "'tain't hardly in my line, but my lord, your father, up at the Castle there, he wrote to me to try to find out your hiding-place. It's a little private job, puts a trifle or so in my pocket, and it's all for your good. So I've persevered till I got a clue, and when once I get a clue, the work's as good as done."

"Oh! hang it! I know that," said Lord

Hauteville; "you need not blow your own trumpet here! But what does my father want with me, all in such a deuce of a hurry? The last sweetmeats that passed between us amounted to a threat to kick me out of doors!"

"Well, now, my lord, it's quite t'other," said Detective Meadows. "I'm sure the Right Honourable Earl of Rockalpine means all for your good, and I don't think it's any breach of confidence in me to read you his lordship's letters to me. I hope I ain't no-ways incommoding the lady."

"Oh! not at all," said Marion, in her blindest tones.

She had at the first sound of the Detective's voice looked up in some alarm from her book, and changed her recumbent posture to a sitting one.

"I always like to show my respect for the ladies," said Meadows:—

‘ Which manly hearts should guard the fair.’”

“ Let me hear my father’s letter, if you please, Mr. Meadows,” said Lord Hauteville, curtly.

“ Certainly, my lord ; leastways, all that concerns your lordship :—

“ ‘ SIR,

“ ‘ You once showed considerable talent, address, and zeal in discovering for me the retreat of my son after that affair in Dean Street——’”

“ Was it you, Meadows, put my father on my track, then ?” said Hauteville.

“ To be sure it was. Who else could have done it ? If there is such a man, I don’t know him ; and what’s more, if I did, I’d take off my hat to him any time in the day. Why, Ferret tried it, and was dead beat.”

“ You’re a clever fellow, Meadows,” said Lord Hauteville. “ Go on. What does the *Relieving Officer* say next ?”

“Why, he goes on to observe,” said Meadows:—

“‘I remember I then told you how much I appreciated your services, and I now require them again. I can, in no way which I can devise, discover the address of my son, now Lord Hauteville. His grandfather, the late Earl of Rockalpine, is to be buried on the 13th instant; this is the 6th. As he is heir by his grandfather’s will to all the real and personal estate, and as he is, I believe, sole executor, and residuary legatee, it is of paramount importance that he should attend the funeral, and be present at the reading of the will. I am ashamed to advertise for him openly: I have already done so indirectly. If you will put every engine in your power to work, and discover my son’s retreat——’”

“Ah,” said Meadows, checking himself, “all the rest is nothing to the purpose; but just this bit of a P.S. is:—

“ ‘P.S. If you succeed in discovering my son’s retreat, and in getting him to hear reason, tell him from me that I am willing to shake hands with him over my father’s coffin ; that bygones shall be bygones, as far as I am concerned ; and I hope Lord Hauteville will for ever cast aside the associates and the follies of Brian Lorraine. The funeral cannot take place till the 13th instant ; therefore my son will, if you are fortunate in your search, have plenty of time to order his mourning—which he can at once do of Poole, whose bill I have paid for him. I hope to see Lord Hauteville at the Castle as soon as possible after you have discovered his retreat. You see I reckon confidently on your success ; and remain, sir, your obedient servant,

“ ‘ ROCKALPINE.’

“ Well, my lord,” said Detective Meadows,  
“ that’s the long and the short of it. I don’t



deny that you've a *fair* excuse, my lord"—and he bowed to Marion—"a very fair excuse ; but my Lord Rockalpine has done the 'ansome thing by you. It isn't every father that'll pay a long chalk of his own free will ; so I hope you'll meet him half way. There's the old Earl lying dead up there ; and though he's died in a ripe old age, yet Death in the 'ouse—a father's death—often softens a man's 'art, and——"

"I'd no idea my father would ever have paid that bill of Poole's," said Lord Hauteville. "Why, he refused me ten pounds the last time I wrote to him about it!"

"As I said before, Death in the 'ouse alters men's minds and softens their 'arts ; it sets us a-thinking and a-thinking who'll go next, and——"

"Meadows, I'll go up to the Castle at once with you," said Lord Hauteville, "if it is not too late."

"Never too late to mend, my lord !" said Meadows, who felt as if he had already fingered the reward, and secured the appointment for his son, which the Earl of Rockalpine offered.

"But you won't go, and leave me here alone, Brian ?" said Marion.

"Well, I don't think it would be very pleasant for me, or any of the parties concerned, were you to accompany me to the Castle."

"In course not," said Detective Meadows ; adding, as Lord Hauteville sauntered out, puffing his cigar, and merely nodding to Marion, "Love in a cottage for me ! Lor', never fret, my dear, nor cry your pretty eyes out ; he'll come back in double-quick time, and no mistake, never fear ; and if he don't, there's as good fish in the sea as ever wor caught. So give us a kiss, there's a dear girl ! The game's up with him, I can see."

"Wretch ! impudent wretch !" cried Marion,

as she gave the too gallant Detective a resounding slap in the face; "I am his wife—I AM LADY HAUTEVILLE!" and she drew her fine form up to its full height, while her beautiful black eyes flashed fire, and her cheeks glowed with rage and wounded pride.

"WALKER!" said the Detective—

"I'm no young man from the country,  
So you can't come over me!"

However, if you aren't agreeable, I shan't break my 'art. So, good night; I hear my lord calling. Good night, miss."

"I am his wife, I tell you, you low villain!"

"Ay, ay; anybody's wife—everybody's wife—somebody else's wife!" and with a wink and a nod, and thrusting his tongue into his cheek, Detective Meadows threw up the parlour-window, vaulted out on to the little grass-plot, and overtook his lordship at the entrance of the Black Wood.

Whatever the Earl of Rockalpine and his son Lord Hauteville felt at this reconciliation in the House of Death, after a total estrangement of many years, neither betrayed any emotion. They shook hands over the now closed coffin of the old lord, whose remains had been removed to the library from the dressing-room, which was partly destroyed by the fire we have already described; and the new Earl then explained to his son why the funeral could not take place at once, namely, that the outer coffin was to be of so costly and elaborate a description (so richly embossed and emblazoned), that Mr. G——, the undertaker, could not promise to have it ready till the thirteenth. “And now, Hauteville,” he said, “I must go and settle with Meadows. I believe your sisters are gone to bed, but I think you will find your mother (who keeps London hours in the country) up

and in the drawing-room. But, hark! who can be ringing at the castle-gates at this hour? I fancy I heard wheels just now! There's the great bell again! What can it be?"

The Earl was ghastly white, cold, and shaking in every limb. That perpetual tormentor, a bad conscience, kept him (as it had done for twenty-five years) for ever on the *qui vive*. An unwonted noise at night, the approach of a policeman, a crowd in the street in which he lived—anything, sufficed to terrify him.

Meanwhile Lord Hauteville, without noticing his father's abject terror, ran downstairs to inquire who was ringing the castle-bell at that unwonted hour.

Lord Rockalpine dreaded to go down, but he had not nerve enough to stay alone with the coffin that contained his father's corpse. He resolved to hasten to the drawing-room to

Lady Rockalpine, and there to await the explanation of the loud and oft-repeated rings at the castle-bell.

.

## CHAPTER XVII.

“My lord! what mean those stains of blood and mire—  
That cheek of ashen hue—that glance of ire?”

LASCELLES.

THE mystery was soon explained; for—pale, agitated, and stained with blood and dust—the young Marquis of Dunstanburgh was shown into the drawing-room of the Castle. The wheels, the noise of which the Earl had heard even in the chamber of Death, were those of *his* carriage, and the account he gave was as follows:—

He said he had arrived at Dunstanburgh the evening before, and had driven over to Bessborough Hall to dine with his sister, Lady Bessborough.

Bessborough Hall was in the same direction as Rockalpine Castle, but three miles beyond the latter. He was on his way back to Dunstanburgh Abbey, at about half-past eleven, his old coachman driving him, and his groom riding before to open the gates, when, as they were passing the outskirts of the Black Wood, just where it joined his own forest of firs, through which there was a carriage-road, he was suddenly waked out of a sleep into which he had fallen by the appearance at the carriage window of a mounted highwayman, as he supposed ; for he wore a black crape mask over the upper part of his face, and held in his hand a pistol, on the bright muzzle of which the moon shone. The wretch was about to fire, and he—the Marquis—not being armed, must have been killed on the spot, when the groom, who had stopped behind to fasten the gate that divided the Black Wood from Dunstanburgh Forest, suddenly



dashed up, his fiery thoroughbred horse compelling the robber's steed to back; and the brave young fellow, who was luckily armed with a double-barrelled pistol, lodged the contents of one barrel in the first highwayman's brains, and discharged the other at a second robber (whom he unfortunately missed).

The highwaymen were three in number; and as the old coachman was about to let off a blunderbuss, which had been his travelling companion for many years, the two robbers who were not wounded galloped off at full speed, old Baggs, the coachman, firing at them as they fled, but without effect.

"I felt some compunction," said the Marquis, "about leaving the wretch (who had fallen from his horse) weltering in his blood; but while I was bending down to examine his wound, a bullet whizzed past my head, and entered the trunk of a tree close by. Con-

vinced by this that the peril was by no means past, we set off at full speed. We then drove on towards Dunstanburgh," added the Marquis, "when it struck me that by that time the miscreants would be gone, and that if we returned to the spot, and examined the person and pockets of the man my groom had shot, we might obtain some clue as to who and what these fellows were ; for the race of highwaymen has so completely died out, that I can scarcely believe they could be in reality 'knights of the road.'

"Old Baggs, my coachman, and Topsum, my groom, were very anxious to investigate this mystery. They will not believe that plunder was the object of these miscreants ; they are convinced it was MURDER—MY MURDER !

"To satisfy my own mind and theirs, I returned to the spot. About a quarter of an hour had elapsed since we had left it, but yet,

strange to say, the dead man and the horse were gone ! We had seen the fellow drop to the ground, and had beheld him lying dead on the grass, with his steed grazing near him, and, before I resolved on going back myself, I had meant to send some of the men from the Abbey to bring the body to the ‘Chequers;’ but it was gone ! The wretches, however, must have been lurking somewhere among the trees : for a shot was fired from a distance, and, though the ball was almost spent, it hit my groom, Topsum, in the right arm. Warned by this that we were not acting wisely in lingering in the Black Wood, and Topsum growing faint from pain and loss of blood, I bound up his arm as well as I could, and I resolved (as the Castle was close at hand, and the Abbey two miles off) to ride Topsum’s horse myself, place him in the carriage, and crave your hospitality for the night.”

“It is very lucky, Dunstanburgh,” said the

Earl, "that Meadows, the Detective, happens (by a singular chance) to be now in the Castle. With your leave, I will send him to you, when you go (as I suppose you would like to do at once) to your room."

"I shall expect Dunstanburgh to return to *me*, after he has washed off that dreadful blood and changed his things for some of yours, Rock-alpine," said the Countess. "I expect him to tea with me."

The Marquis bowed. At tea with the mother, he could talk of the daughter. But he agreed to see Meadows, who longed to be on the track of the supposed highwaymen.

Lord Hauteville, who never felt at home with those of his own rank, did not choose to help to entertain the Marquis. He retired to bed, and the late ardent lover was soon fast asleep in the Castle, while his bride of a week was crying on her pillow in the cottage—not from wounded love, but wounded vanity.

The Earl of Rockalpine, immensely relieved to find that the solution of this strange visit had no reference to him, welcomed the young Marquis as warmly as so cold and stern a host could. Lady Rockalpine, wearied to death of her own company and the monotony of her life at the Castle, was all smiles and good-humour.

While the Marquis was shown to his room, and supplied with whatever he required from the Earl's wardrobe, and while he gave a detailed account of the attack to Detective Meadows, Lady Rockalpine slipped into her dressing-room, to smooth her still fine hair, touch up her complexion, her lips, and eyebrows, exchange her dull, heavy dress for one lighter and more becoming, and add a brooch and a few other ornaments to her attire. Revived in beauty, fragrant with some new *bouquet*, graceful and gay, her ladyship presided at the tea she had ordered for her unexpected guest.

A bright wood and coal fire, piled up artistically, burned in the huge, cavernous grate. The room was lighted up. Her ladyship's tea-table was covered with a snow-white damask cloth ; the bright silver and the delicate china reflected the lights and the fire ; the tea was perfection, the muffins and the buttered toast, the apricot and quince marmalade, could not be surpassed ; and the young Marquis, hungry after his adventure in the Black Wood, fully enjoyed his delicate repast. The Marquis thought again and again how delightful it would be when he was married to Edith, to have so engaging, admiring, and sympathising a mother-in-law ! and they talked of the attack on his lordship in the wood, until they had exhausted that topic, and then he led the discourse to the theme next his heart—EDITH. Neither Edith's mother nor her admirer suffered any doubt of *her* consent to enter into the bright

future they were mapping out between them.

It was three o'clock before they retired to rest. The Marquis, who was a kind master, went to Topsum's chamber before he sought his own, and, finding that Mrs. Prosser had dressed the groom's wound (it was only a flesh wound), and had administered a soothing draught, under the influence of which Topsum slept soundly, the young lover retired to his own apartments—*apartments* could be prepared for *him*, though Arthur Bertram, who had saved Edith's life, could only have had a garret among the servants. Dunstanburgh dreamt of Edith. In that dream she was arrayed as a bride—all orange blossom, lace, white satin, and pearls, tears, smiles, and blushes ; but when he tried to clasp her to his heart, the fair form shrunk into a skeleton arrayed in a shroud, and a voice said, "THY BRIDE IS DEATH!"

## CHAPTER XVIII.

“ The morn is up again—the dewy morn,  
With breath all incense, and with cheek all bloom,  
Laughing the clouds away, as if in scorn.”

BYRON.

THE next morning, as soon as it was light, Edith rose from her sleepless couch ; she was so miserable when she thought of the reception her father had given to her heart's idol, her beloved Arthur, and that, too, just after he had again saved her life, at the imminent risk of his own ! To treat *him* so haughtily, so coldly—to offer *him* a room in the servants' garret ! He, so gentle, so dignified, so refined ! What if he *were* old Croft's grandson ? He had the heart and the bearing of Prince



Arthur, himself ! And that *her* father should try to humble *him* ! In the solitude of her own chamber, her cheeks burned, her tears gushed forth, and her bosom swelled at the thought. Poor Edith sank on her knees by her bedside, and tried to pray—to pray for faith, hope, resignation—to pray for Arthur, and the happy home they had so often pictured to themselves as one day to be theirs. Presently she heard a low tap at her door; she rose and admitted Phœbe, the maid who waited on herself and Ida.

“I thought I heard you stirring, my lady,” said Phœbe, “so I have brought your hot water. And, if you please, my lady, this note was given me just now by a village lad, with orders to give it to you when you were alone.”

Edith tried to look unconcerned as she took it, but she blushed and trembled when she recognised Arthur’s handwriting. Phœbe left

the room. Edith tore open the note. It was hastily written and blotted—could it be with tears? It ran thus :—

“DEAREST!

“A quarrel has arisen between the M. of D. and myself—he has insulted me grossly—it seems he is jealous of what he calls my insolent familiarity with one whose parents encourage his addresses. I did not know he had declared himself. Alas! I have long suspected that he loved you. Whatever happens, do not too readily condemn your devoted, most unhappy

“ARTHUR.”

This strange note added to Edith's distress and discomfort, and, unable to bear the confinement of her chamber, while she felt so restless and impatient, she hastily completed her toilet, put on her hat and cloak, and stole down stairs, and out into the garden.

Edith took out Arthur's singular note, and read it again and again. "Whatever happens do not condemn your devoted, unhappy Arthur." As she pondered, with a white cheek and sinking heart, on these words, the morning breeze fluttered the paper in her hand, and she saw, as it opened the leaves, that there was a P.S. on the other side. She eagerly read—

"I hope in this hour of trial to be able to act up to my principles. I try, too, to have entire faith in your love, your constancy. What can the M. of D. mean by his confidence that you will be his? and by what right has he dared to insult so vilely one . . . . My brain is on fire! Adieu!"

Edith thrust the note into her bosom, and walked hurriedly, but with an uneven step, along the paths, and across the lawn, crisp and glittering with hoar frost. An old bloodhound, who was always loose at night, and

who, a terror to foes, was gentle as a lamb to his friends—Edith particularly—came up, his long, silken tan ears hanging by the side of his grave, solemn, handsome face; and poking his black, cold nose into Edith's hand, and climbing up her side with his thoroughbred forepaws, he seemed to beg leave to follow her.

Sick at heart with suspense and fear, her pulse throbbing with the indignation a loving woman always feels at the thought of an insult to her dearest one; doubtful how to act, and shivering with a vague presentiment of coming evil, Edith was yet glad of the bloodhound's company. She loved old Herbert, and coaxed and patted him absently, and with a cold hand, as they went on together.

Edith had heard of the Marquis's adventure of the night before. She was aware that he was sleeping in the Castle, for Phoebe had

come into her room after she was in bed and asleep, and had waked her up to tell her the wonderful news.

Edith walked on through the shrubbery to the summer-house where she had met Arthur. As the reader knows, it was separated only by a hedge from the strip of grass-land that connected it with the Black Wood. Here, to her surprise, Hubert made a dead stop, whined, sniffed, grew excited, smelt the ground, uttered a low cry, and bounding over the hedge, ran quickly along, his nose on the ground all the way, till he was lost to her view in the dark depths of the Black Wood.

Edith called him back in vain; when, lo! her eye following the direction of his footsteps, she saw on the leaves and the blades of grass some dark crimson drops, at sight of which she grew cold and faint; and she knew that the blood-hound was on the track—the track of blood—for she felt certain

that those gouts were of human gore, and were somehow connected with the attack on the young Marquis in the Black Wood on the previous night.

Edith sank down on the steps of the summer-house, and tried to collect her thoughts.

She had not a very vivid recollection of the details of Phœbe's wonderful story of the night before; for she was fast asleep, and dreaming of Interlachen and Arthur, when Phœbe came in, sent by Lady Ida, to tell her sister that the Marquis had been attacked by highwaymen in the Black Wood, and was actually at that moment closeted with Detective Meadows in the state apartments. Edith remembered that Phœbe had said that young Topsum—his lordship's handsome, dapper young groom—was wounded in the arm (for Edith was always alive to suffering in any shape); and she remembered, too, that the Marquis had escaped unhurt, and that Phœbe

had said (on the authority of old Baggs), that the villains were no common highwaymen—that they wanted to *murder* his lord, *not to rob him*.

But all this, which filled her heart with horror now, had scarcely affected her the night before; for then the Marquis alone was concerned. Now, she could not help associating Arthur's quarrel with Dunstanburgh with this mysterious affair; not that she for a moment allowed a shadow of suspicion of Arthur's honour to cross her heart. The Marquis might have so grossly insulted him, that even he, in spite of his Christian horror of duelling, might have been unable to act up to his own high standard of forbearance and endurance. In the hour of trial he might (for the warm blood of youth flowed in his veins)—he might have forgotten the resolution he had so often expressed, never under any circumstances to suffer himself to be induced to take a part in

what he called a cold-blooded murder, with malice prepense, to blacken it.

That was possible—just barely possible—but very unlikely, Edith thought; for the Marquis was not only a nobleman, he was a gentleman, and she did not think he would have so far forgotten himself as to strike her Arthur, or inflict any other personal and intolerable indignity on his dear and sacred person. And even if he had done so, Arthur, in the exasperation of the moment, might have knocked him down, but he would not have called him out.

Edith had known Arthur so intimately from his childhood, she was so perfectly acquainted with his feelings, his thoughts, his modes of action—she knew him so thoroughly, he had so often talked freely to her of what he never spoke of to the world (only betraying it by his deeds)—the deep religion, the Christianity of his heart—that Edith felt certain he could



never deliberately do an unchristian act. This cowardly attack on the Marquis in the Black Wood could in no way be connected with his quarrel with Arthur.

She started and stepped aside as she pondered these things in her mind, for as she gathered up the folds of her black dress, she perceived that the hem of her white petticoat was stained with blood. Edith shook as with an ague when she perceived the deadly stain, and heartily she wished herself back in her own chamber.

It was a very lonely part of the grounds, and there was not a creature to be seen, a leaf stirring; when, just as she had decided on retracing her steps, Hubert came bounding back to her, with something in his mouth, which he dropped at her feet. It was a round straw hat, with a black crape mask fastened to it, both stained with blood, as were the bloodhound's jowl and dewlap. But—oh! horror

of horrors—that hat! As she gazes on it a deadly faintness comes over her for it is a hat—a round, straw hat—belonging to Arthur, and which he had bought in Switzerland. The bit of black ribbon that bound it, and that was tied round the crown, had been put on by herself; and on the head-lining were the initials “A. B.,” marked by her, with her own auburn hair.

She well remembered the happy summer day, in a dark pine forest, the ground of which was studded with wild strawberries, when, as she sat embroidering a collar, while Arthur read “Lucille” to her, she had playfully taken a long hair of golden brown from one of her plaits, and had marked the head-lining of the hat he had thrown on the grass at her feet, with those dear initials, “A. B.”

And now, how comes that hat—which Arthur so valued, so treasured, for the sake of that very mark—to be spotted, blotted with

blood, and stained with earth, and to have that black crape mask attached to it?

The blood-hound stood looking up into Edith's face for applause, wagging his tail, licking her hand, and placing his fore-paws on her shoulders in his triumph and glee.

And Edith—what made her pick up that hat, and that black crape mask? And why did she ascend the steps of the summer-house, and, opening the door, sink half-fainting on the first seat she met with? And what, too, in that summer-house, is Hubert sniffing at through the closed door of the cupboard?

Edith starts to her feet; the cupboard is only secured by a button—she opens it. What does she behold? An overcoat, a pair of boots, and a pocket-handkerchief, all spotted with blood and mire, all well known to her as Arthur's; and in the further corner a wash-hand-basin, which had evidently been recently

used and emptied, but at the bottom of which was blood ! blood ! blood !

Oh ! what had Arthur to do with this blood ? Was it his, or, worse still, had he shed it ? Impossible ! The thought was treason to her beloved. Oh ! if she could but see him—but ask him what it all meant !

There was a loft, where apples and pears had been at one time kept, at the top of the summer-house ; a small light ladder placed against the trap-door formed the access to it. This it was that, as children, Arthur and herself had been used to ascend, in their defence of their castle against the invaders, the little Crofts, and their custom was to run up the ladder, draw it up after them at the approach of the enemy, and shut down the trap-door.

And now, gazing in dismay, doubt, and terror from the window, Edith perceives the person whom, from her maid's description, she

knows to be Detective Meadows, with several other men coming towards the summer-house. Some vague, mysterious foreshadowing of evil and peril to her Arthur (connected with his blood-stained garments), prompts her to catch them up, with the washing-basin, and with steps winged by fear, darting up the ladder, she drew it up after her, and closed the trap-door, just as she heard the voices and steps of Detective Meadows and his companions, as they halted and held a council of war outside the summer-house.

Hubert had left her side; he had darted off again, sniffing at the ground as he went, and following the track of blood back into the Black Wood.

## CHAPTER XIX.

“ Love oft times in the haughtiest knight  
 His easiest conquest sees—  
 The plume that leads the foremost fight,  
 The toy to every breeze.”

SIR E. BULWER LYTTON.

EDITH's heart beat quick ; she hears the party ascending the steps, and entering the summer-house. She listens—her soul is in her ear ! She distinguishes the voices of the Marquis of Dunstanburgh and Roger Croft. Lord Hauteville, too, was of the party ; for a hunt of any kind brings men of all descriptions together, and, little as Lord Hauteville liked the young Marquis, an investigation of this kind, with Detective Meadows at its head, was irresistible.

The Earl of Rockalpine, alone, felt no inclination to take part in a search that must lead him to a place he shunned and loathed beyond all others on earth—the Black Wood.

Edith, from the spot in the loft where she was kneeling, her ear close to the trap-door, distinctly heard Roger Croft say,

“I wonder who has removed the ladder, and shut the trap-door of the loft?”

“Very likely the under-gardener, sir,” said one of the men; “he often wants that ladder.”

“Let’s have a squint into the cupboard, Detective,” said Roger Croft.

“Nothing here, sir,” said Detective Meadows.

“And what did you expect to find there?” asked the young Marquis; “eh, Roger?”

“I? Oh! I didn’t expect to find anything particular,” said Roger; “only one never knows what *may* turn up, when a horrible deed like this has been attempted. It’s

just possible that the nearest place of shelter might contain some clue; one of the assassins might have hidden up here, or stowed away his weapon, or his disguise, or something."

"Well, I vote we push on," said Lord Hauteville; "we're losing precious time. Let's get to the spot where Dunstanburgh was attacked. There may be footsteps or something there—there's nothing here."

He left the summer-house, followed by Detective Meadows, the young Marquis and Roger Croft remaining for some minutes behind.

"Excuse me, Dunstanburgh," said Roger Croft, "but is there any person in the world who owes you a grudge?"

"No," said the young Marquis, colouring; "not that I know of—at any rate, no one who would be capable of anything so mean and dastardly as assassination."



“But have you had a quarrel with anyone, Dunstanburgh? I’m an old friend and school-fellow, and I think the friendship of so many years *entitles* me to sift a matter in which your safety is concerned.”

“Well, then, Roger, I’ve had a desperate quarrel with Arthur Bertram.”

“Ha!” cried Roger. “Tell me the particulars.”

“Oh! I was to blame; and if Bertram hadn’t been so deuced cool and uppish, I’d gladly have made *l’amende honorable*; but, as it was, he put me in a deuce of a passion, and I forgot myself so far as to call him a bastard, and to threaten him with a horse-whipping.”

“But when did this happen?” asked Roger, eagerly.

“Well, to begin at the beginning,” said the Marquis. “I must tell you that my sister, Lady Bessborough, knowing I was

coming down to Dunstanburgh, happened to ask me to call at Madame La Mode's, in Piccadilly, in order to bring her down some head-dress, which she was to wear, as Anne Boleyn, at Lord Egerton's fancy ball, at the Priory. She was afraid it would not come in time, and wanted me to make sure of it. So I called at old La Mode's, and was shown up into the milliner's show-rooms, where fourteen or fifteen pretty girls were wasting their bloom, youth, and beauty, to set off that of their wealthier and happier sisters. Poor things! what thin fingers, hollow eyes, and pale cheeks I saw assembled there! The forewoman, a hideous old maid, explained to me that my sister's Anne Boleyn head-dress was not quite ready. I found out, afterwards, that it was not even begun; but she said it should be sent by post, &c., &c., &c., and I left her shop, and sauntered into the jeweller's, next door, to see about some studs I had ordered,

when I came suddenly upon Arthur Bertram. He was standing with his back towards me, but I knew him at a glance. He was fitting, with the help of the jeweller, a small miniature portrait, on ivory, and a lock of hair into a gold setting. The lock of hair arrested my attention. There is but one head in the world from which that hair *could* have been severed. As he unwound it to its full length—its extraordinary length, I may say—and a ray of sun lighted up that golden gloss, so rare on brown hair—so peculiar, indeed, to one only—suspicion grew into certainty, and I felt my blood boil. That blood was not cooled when, after the hair was placed under the crystal (Bertram would not let any fingers but his own touch it), I saw the other side of the locket, as, absorbed in its contemplation, he held it in his hands before his eyes. It was an exquisite miniature of—of—of Edith Lorraine.”

Roger started—nay, grew white.

“Yes, there could be no mistake about it. There is no other face so full at once of feeling, intellect, beauty, charm! There was the fair full brow, shaded by those waves of golden brown; the large, deep-set, dark-blue eyes, so full of light; the little delicate nose; the enchanting mouth; the sweet smile; the very dimple in the left cheek, and in the round chin. But, God of heaven! Roger, there was a look of deep love, which I have never seen in that haunting face. Roger, you know how I love, how I idolize Edith. You have often assured me my love is reciprocated, as far as a young creature so gentle and so timid may reciprocate an unacknowledged passion; you have often assured me that Edith Lorraine has only a sister’s feelings towards Arthur Bertram; and now—now, when I have revealed my adoration of Edith to her mother, *who has all but promised her to me*—now, that

I only wait till the funeral of the late Earl is well over to declare myself to the present one, and to the heavenly girl herself—*now, I know that Arthur Bertram and Edith Lorraine are lovers*, for aught I know, betrothed lovers ; and if so, all I live for, care for on earth, is taken from *me*, the Marquis of Dunstanburgh, to be given to that bastard (for such I believe him to be), yes, to be given to that bastard, Arthur Bertram ! And he thus becomes far wealthier than I am, for the rose of the world, the pearl above price, is his ; and I envy, I hate, I curse him !”

“ Ah ! but,” said Roger, “ I think you jump too rapidly to a conclusion, so torturing to yourself, so disgraceful to Lady Edith, so distressing to her friends.”

“ How so ? Did I not see her bright tress in his fingers—her portrait smiling at him ?”

“ But he may have got both by stealth ; or she may have commissioned him to get the

miniature and the hair set, as a surprise for her mother or her sister ; or she may, looking upon him as the adopted brother of so many years, from whom she is now suddenly parted, have given them to him—not as a love-gift, but just as a sister might.”

“No, no, no ! The paper in which they were wrapped up lay on the counter before him ; and though he caught it up in a great hurry, I had already seen the words, in her delicate and beautiful hand, ‘*Keep this, my own Arthur, until the original is yours.*’ ”

## CHAPTER XX.

"What guardian angel's like a woman's love?"

LASCELLES.

"THAT'S a sticker, I own," said Roger, livid in his turn with rage, jealousy, and envy. "I wonder you didn't snatch the locket from his hand, and kick him out of the shop."

"Two can play at that game," said the Marquis; "and Bertram's a very strong, active fellow, and about the best wrestler going. Besides, fancy my name getting into the papers as connected with such an assault, and about Lady Edith Lorraine, too! No; I kept out of his sight, and very soon afterwards he left the shop. I saw no more of him till yesterday

evening, when, on my way to dine at Bessborough Hall, I passed the Black Wood. As it was rather a steep ascent, I got out of the carriage to walk up hill, and I came suddenly on this fellow Bertram, sitting on the trunk of a felled tree, and gazing at the very miniature I told you of. I came upon him so suddenly, that he dropped it. Before he was aware, I believe, who I was, I darted at it, and picked it up. He snatched at it in vain; I resisted, and being, I own, in a deuce of a rage, I said : ‘ Let me know, sir, if you please, by what authority you have obtained possession of a portrait and a lock of hair of Lady Edith Lorraine’s?’

“ ‘ I will answer that question,’ he replied, very coolly, ‘ when you tell me by what right you put it.’

“ He was so cool and quiet, that I was quite off my guard, when suddenly closing with me, he snatched the locket out of my hand, and



pushed me—I don't know whether intentionally or accidentally—from the raised footpath (you know it well—the gangway they call it), some six feet in depth, into the road. Luckily the carriage and servants had turned the corner, and thus the latter did not see the indignity offered to their master. I was mad with rage, and soon clambered up the bank ; and when I saw him putting the locket in his bosom, I felt as if I could have strangled him then and there. My blood was boiling—his seemed quite cool. Fool that I was, I shouted in my blind rage, 'I demand that portrait! You can have no right to the miniature of a lady whose mother encourages my addresses!'

“ ‘That encouragement will stand you in no stead if the Lady Edith herself declines them, as I strongly suspect she will do,’ he said, very calmly, and with a most provoking smile on his confoundedly fine face.

“ ‘And yours, I suppose, she will accept,

eh? and prefer a low bastard to the Marquis of Dunstanburgh?’ I said, resolved to close with him, and have a tussle for the picture.

“At the word *bastard*, he started, and turned first very white, and then very red.

“‘You are a Marquis,’ he said, ‘but you are no gentleman; I am no bastard, and I am a gentleman—we do not meet on an equality. You are aiming at getting possession of this picture; now listen—you shall have my heart’s blood first. If you approach me, I will throw you again. I could wrestle (as you well know) with two like you when I was eighteen. But stand off; I don’t want to disgrace or to punish you, and before your own servants, too. See—they are come back to look for you.’

“‘Bastard! base, low-born bastard!’ I said—‘for you are nothing else—you *shall* give me the satisfaction that none but a coward would refuse. Meet me on Dunstan-

burgh Flats at noon to-morrow. There is no place so safe, lonely, and remote. Bring anyone you please as your second. We are both good shots ; let pistols be our weapons. A boat shall be in readiness, in case I fall, to row you off to my yacht, and *vice versâ*.'

" 'I am no *duellist*—or rather, no MURDERER,' said the young bastard, with the air of a prince.

" 'But you shall be the former,' I cried ; 'I hope to prevent your being the latter. If you refuse to meet me, I'll post you all over England, and horsewhip you wherever we meet. I shall expect you at Dunstanburgh Flats to-morrow, at noon ; you know the spot well. You know the alternative, too,' I shouted, hoarse with passion. 'Bastard ! will not the Lady Edith be ashamed of the coward, the abject coward, your refusal will prove you ?'

" 'I will be there,' he said, white with

rage ; and I descended the bank, entered my carriage, and saw him no more. And now, Roger Croft," added the Marquis, "we are old friends, and I know you hate this Bertram, and for my sake, too, as much as I do; and so I ask you to be my second. I know, under existing laws, it is a great risk. If either of us fall—and one of us *must* and *shall*, for we cannot both breathe freely in the same world—you will have to go abroad for a time. You may be much bothered, and therefore, if you give me this proof of your regard, you deserve well of me in return. I have no relations except two married sisters, both very wealthy ; my large estates are, as you know, entailed ; but all that is *not* entailed—all my personalty, and twenty thousand pounds—I leave to you. I made my will last night ; it is properly signed, sealed, and witnessed. Nay, no thanks ; what I offer you I can well spare if I fall ; and, as I have no one I care a

pin for, it is no great proof of affection. But answer me at once—will you be my second?”

There was something to Edith's ear very strange, hoarse, and hollow in the voice in which, after a long pause, Roger Croft answered—

“I WILL!”

“We have not much time to spare,” said the Marquis; “for we *must* join in the search in the Black Wood, and present ourselves at the Countess's breakfast-table. We can then slip out on some excuse or other, and I will drive you over to Dunstanburgh.”

“Agreed,” said Roger; “but I don't think that fellow Bertram will *show up*; nay, more, I've a great notion that he's at the bottom of the attempt to pick you off last night; and, all things considered, I think one would almost be justified in having him before a magistrate—the old Rector would do—who, I

dare say, would see the thing in the true light, and commit him at once."

"No," said the Marquis; "I don't believe he'd anything to do with the attack of last night. There's something fine about the fellow, after all. I shouldn't like to take an unfair advantage of him, but I should be very glad to give him his *quietus* in a fair and equal combat—man to man. I've told you what I have done for you; even at the worst you can't take any harm. If I fall, your fortune's made; if Bertram's picked off, I'll do the same for you by deed of gift, and we'll leave the country together for a time, till it's all blown over. When we return, we may find that the fair Edith has dried her tears."

"Oh! no doubt of that," said Roger. "If a living dog is better than a dead lion, how much better must a living lion be than a dead dog? Besides, women have such short memories. Look at all your disconsolate widows

—all weeds one month, and all orange blossoms the next. If there's a transferable thing in the world, it's a woman's heart. That's the ticket!"

They left the summer-house as Roger spoke; and Edith, sick at heart, and the cold drops standing like beads on her brow (for she had heard every word that the Marquis and Roger Croft had spoken), prayed where she still knelt by the trap-door—prayed fervently to her Father in heaven for guidance and strength, and for inspiration how to act, so as to save her Arthur from being murdered, or—more dreadful still—from being a murderer.

Edith rose from her knees, refreshed and comforted in spirit, and quite resolved how to act.

Dunstanburgh Flats were about five miles from Rockalpine. They owed their name to a number of broad, flat slabs of rock (of large size), which were only visible at low water,

and were embedded in firm, smooth, level sand, which, when the tide was out, was some acres in extent, and was curiously fenced in by a ridge or rampart of rocks.

This strange spot was on the Dunstanburgh estate, and on all that wild coast there was no place so lonely and desolate; for there were many traditions connected with it, and ghosts of shipwrecked mariners were said to meet and dance by moonlight, at low water, on the Flats and the level sand; and even at noon, when the tide was out, there was an impression among the superstitious peasantry that the spot was "na' canny," and that it was haunted. The rocks that shut in the Flats were an excellent place for crabs, periwinkles, limpets, and whelks: and it had been a very favourite resort of Edith's, Arthur's, and the little Crofts, when they were children, and, with nursery-maids, donkeys and panniers, went picnicking by the sea.



Edith was well acquainted with a comparatively short cut to the Flats, and she was determined that she would be there by noon, to prevent the hostile meeting, which must (considering the vindictive and jealous feelings the young Marquis had expressed) end either in the taking of her Arthur's life, or the ruin of his peace and prospects on earth, and, perhaps, through all eternity.

Edith looked at her watch; it was half-past eight. She had not breakfasted—she had taken nothing that morning, and she felt faint and sinking. She felt that she required some refreshment to enable her to carry out her scheme; and, to avert suspicion, she felt she ought to appear at the family breakfast-table. Her plan was, to leave it as soon as possible, make her escape through the gardens into the Black Wood, and thence across the moor, down to the sea-beach, and along the rocky coast to Dunstanburgh Flats. She

knew that the Marquis and Roger, who were going to drive a great part of the way, would take a much longer and more circuitous route, but one which would render it impossible that they should meet with her. As for Arthur, she did not know what road he would take to that deadly rendezvous; but even if he took the short cut, so well known to them in childhood, and they met among the rocks, or in the Black Wood, or on the moor, what matter? She would have the better opportunity of dissuading him from listening to the call of worldly honour, when opposed to the direct commandment of his Maker; and though her cheek flushed, and her heart beat high, at the thought of that possible meeting, she would not let even the misconception the Marquis and Roger might put upon it prevent her doing what she felt to be her duty.

There was a pile of straw in one corner of

the loft, and carefully Edith hid up the blood-stained hat, black mask, overcoat, boots, and basin under that pile.

“I do not conceal them,” she said to herself, “because I believe it possible that the best, the kindest, and most noble of men has suddenly changed from a Christian gentleman into a vile, cowardly assassin ; but I have a heart-sickening suspicion that my Arthur is the object of some base, crafty, and remorseless plot, which the successful concealment of these things may tend to avert.”

“Roger Croft, too (she thought), what could be his object in trying to persuade the Marquis that she, Edith Lorraine, loved him, and did not love Arthur ? He must know—he could not but know—that the society of the Marquis was rather distasteful to her than otherwise. He must have seen how very, very dear Arthur was to her heart. She had done her best, and so had her young lover, to

conceal their mutual and passionate love from the world ; but the son of Mrs. Croft, the brother of Gloriana—how could he be deceived ? Besides, he had constantly, when alone with her, tried to disparage and ridicule Arthur, and to make indirect attempts at winning her for himself ; and her defence of her beloved had always called forth his most malignant sarcasms and spiteful inuendoes. And now, what could be his object in firing up the Marquis against Arthur, and giving him hopes, which he must know to be groundless, of his lordship's obtaining her hand—her heart ?”

After listening for some time, and hearing nothing but the waving of the fir-trees against the windows of the summer-house, Edith opened the trap-door, let down the slight ladder she had drawn up after her, and stepping softly down, she was in the little sitting-room. Edith then withdrew the ladder ;

she opened a window at the back of the summer-house, and let the ladder out (with some difficulty, but she did effect it); and as the snow lay about a foot thick on that cold, northern, shaded side of the little building, it sunk into the soft white deposit, and was seen no more. Edith then looked about her for a long pole with an iron hook at the end of it, with which, as children, they had been wont to pull down and fasten the trap-door. There was a little inner recess, quite dark, and full of tools, cucumber-frames, flower-pots, &c., &c. Edith groped about there, in hopes of finding the pole; as she did so, she heard voices and steps approaching the summer-house. She drew back into a dark corner; her heart beat wildly. What if she should be found there? How could she explain or account for her presence? What if they should get a ladder, and search the loft? She distinguished Roger's voice—that odious

voice, always disliked, and now detested ; for now her quick, womanly instinct told her he was aiming at the destruction of her beloved.

“I say, Meadows,” cried Roger, “shall we have another squint at the summer-house?”

Meadows replied, “No, sir; it’s only wasting time.”

“Right enough there, old boy,” said Lord Hauteville; “and if you’re as sharp set as I am, you’ll be glad to be looking at something better than that rat-hole. I’m for grub. Come, Roger, let’s push on.”

The next moment, to Edith’s great relief, they were all gone save Hubert, who, perhaps conscious of her presence, remained sniffing at the door, and whining, too, until convinced that the men who had so terrified her must have reached the house.

Edith came forth, and, rushing across the

crisp snow, through the shrubbery, and across the gardens into the conservatory, which communicated with the state drawing-room, escaped, unperceived by any one, to her own room. There she hastily changed her dress, smoothed her hair, made a suitable toilette, and fitted herself to attend to the summons of the breakfast-bell, which rang a muffled peal, out of respect to the presence of Death in the house, about a quarter of an hour after she had re-entered her room; but before Edith went down to the breakfast-room, she entered Ida's boudoir, and, to her surprise, found that young lady flushed, excited, and in tears. Astonished at any emotion in one generally so impassive, Edith inquired what had happened to discompose her sister. To her surprise, Ida said,

“Is it possible you do not know? Hauteville, our brother, our only brother—poor Brian of *my* nursery days, not *yours*—is come

back ! He was very kind to me when I was a little girl, and I am so fond of him. Oh ! I have often cried when I have been awake at night, to think that I did not know where he was, and that papa had forbidden him the house."

Edith embraced Ida. She had no idea Ida could love anything or care for anybody.

"Let us go down to welcome him, Edith," said Ida ; "I hear he is in the butler's pantry with old Malmsey and the steward. We dare not welcome him before mamma ; let us go down to tell him how glad we are to have him back again."

Edith gladly agreed ; and the two girls, entering the old butler's room, embraced the prodigal. Ida, the taller, finer woman, wept on his breast, to his great surprise ; and Edith, the lovely sylph, looked up into his face to try to see something to love in it. In vain ! in vain ! The goodness Ida remembered had



been blotted out and blotched by habitual intemperance ; but even he was a little touched by Ida's emotion, and he felt abashed at the thought how little he deserved her love. Meanwhile, the bald old butler stood at a respectful distance, his hands behind him, looking on ; and the steward, a jolly old fellow, peeped in at the door, well pleased to witness the prodigal's return.

## CHAPTER XXI.

“Murder most foul, as in the best it is ;  
But this most foul, base, and unnatural !”

SHAKESPEARE.

THE Countess of Rockalpine, who habitually breakfasted in her own apartments, and seldom left them till the dinner-like luncheon was announced, was up betimes, out of compliment to the young Marquis. She was exquisitely dressed, her cheeks and lips were delicately tinted, and her still handsome face was sunny with smiles. She took her seat at the breakfast-table, and began, by a little flow of complimentary small-talk, to enliven the rather silent and somewhat gloomy party. No one who saw Lady Rockalpine looking so

pretty and so animated, smiling so sweetly, and so becomingly dressed, could have recognised the dull, sallow, discontented woman, who of late had never spoken but to scold, reproach, complain, or bewail herself—dressed richly, of course—for she had nothing that was not costly—but latterly without any attention to the becoming, or any interest in the appearance.

Lady Ida, like her mother, made the most of her charms; but Edith, without a thought of her appearance (for her whole heart, soul, and mind were engrossed by Arthur's peril), was the sole object of the Marquis's thoughts; and Roger Croft, whom Lord Hauteville had invited to breakfast at the Castle, as he had been so active in the fruitless search in the Black Wood, could hardly withdraw his crafty eyes from Edith's beauty.

The family was not yet in mourning, and therefore Lady Rockalpine, who detested black, which was very unbecoming to her,

was dressed in a ruby velvet wrapper, trimmed with ermine ; and a Marie Stuart head-dress of point lace was matched by a collar and sleeves of the same. Ida was in lilac silk, and her hair exquisitely dressed ; but Edith, who had hastily arrayed herself in what came first to hand, had yet, strange to say, never appeared to greater advantage. She was flushed with the excitement of her feelings ; her hair was brushed hastily off her fine forehead, and a black velvet Zouave jacket, and black *glacé* silk skirt, set off her fair skin by the force of contrast. Edith could not bear to put on anything but black, while her grandfather lay dead in the Castle.

Lord Rockalpine was silent and reserved. He seldom spoke at breakfast, and was generally absorbed by the *Times*. He did not appear to listen to the conversation at all ; but had anyone been disposed to watch him,

a nervous twitching of his mouth and nostrils, and a deadlier pallor on his pale, plaster-of-Paris-like face, would have betrayed the interest with which he listened to the account of the search in the Black Wood, and to Hauteville's comments on the impertinence of some idle trespasser, in defacing one of the finest trees with initials and hieroglyphics.

The Countess of Rockalpine, when breakfast was over, tried to persuade the Marquis to remain at the Castle.

"The present melancholy state of things here," she said, "debars us all from music, billiards, or any other amusement worth speaking of; but if you and Edith, my lord, will play a game of chess, I will bring my work and watch the game, and Ida and I will have a bet upon it."

To Edith's great relief, the Marquis excused himself (with extreme reluctance), for he longed to be with Edith; but his dreadful

appointment must be kept, and so, with many apologies, he pleaded business, but begged leave to accept the challenge on some more favourable opportunity. Lady Rockalpine, upon this, exclaimed—

“Let it be this evening, then, Marquis! Nay, don’t refuse. You must give us your company to dinner; and after dinner I will back you, and Ida shall back Edith; and I hope, for my sake, you’ll give *all* your attention to the game,” she added, archly.

And the young Marquis glanced at Edith, and said—

“I will do my best, Countess; but I will not promise an impossibility.”

The breakfast-party broke up, when the Marquis and Roger announced that they must set out at once for Dunstanburgh. Lord Hauteville felt that he ought to return to Marion, his bride, whom he had left, offended and alone, at the Mill Cottage; but the com-

pany of Detective Meadows, with whom he had agreed to "crack a bottle" at the "Rockalpine Arms," (while consulting what steps were to be taken about the attack on the Marquis,) was much more to his taste.

"Marion was all very well," he said to himself, "and I was madly in love with her before I made her 'my lady' and my wife; but now she's an ill-tempered, fault-finding, quarrelsome bore, teasing me to own her, although, until my grandfather's will is read, and I'm independent of them all, it would be madness. I can't think what made me such a fool as to marry! Now she's mine, I don't care a hang about her; and as for beauty, her face and form, which seemed so bewitching, have no charm for me now. I declare, every maid about the Castle seems to me prettier than Marion!"

Such ever is, sooner or later, the reaction in the heart and mind of the sensualist, when

once the object of his passion becomes his. And brief and evanescent as the empire of Marion over Hauteville, is that of personal beauty over the heart where love is a *passion*, not an *affection*.

The Marquis and Roger Croft gone, the Countess retired to her boudoir, to write to her "dear friends" about the "darling Marquis," her "dear Dunstanburgh," and to luxuriate in the last terrible photographs of vanity, passion, and crime published by the younger Dumas.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



1

2

3

•

